

EMPATHY IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOM:
EXPLORING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS, UNDERSTANDING AND PRACTICES

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This dissertation is dedicated to the people who demonstrate care for others to help them succeed and especially those who have cared for me. I dedicate this dissertation to my family and friends, whose unyielding love, support, and encouragement have enriched my soul and inspired me to pursue and complete this research.

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EMPATHY IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOM:

EXPLORING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS, UNDERSTANDING AND PRACTICES

This qualitative study was designed to explore teacher understanding of empathy and its expression in their relationships and interactions with young children within the context of early childhood caring and education. Empathy is a crucial aspect of positive relationships and is related to positive outcomes in teaching and caring. An underlying assumption of this study is increased knowledge of how teachers understand empathy for the purposes of caring, teaching, and interacting with young children will shed light on how they internalized it, biases or deficits they hold, and why and how they are or are not effective in showing empathy toward young children. Although the needs for empathy in early childhood caring and education is clear, recent research has been focused mostly on the empathic ability of elementary or middle school teachers. In the present study, data were collected through interviews and classroom observations; thematic, constant comparative, and first and second cycles of coding and analysis were utilized. Three South Korean preschool teachers participated in this qualitative case study focused on exploring teachers' perceptions, understanding, and practices (e.g., language, attitudes, and behaviors) in relation to empathy. This study revealed that the teachers expressed empathy toward children, albeit it was most often 'pretend empathy.' The findings also revealed how teachers recognize the conditions and climates that support, as well as challenge teachers' empathic concerns and interactions. Five major themes along with multiple subthemes were identified, including: (1) meaning of empathy and its role; (2) acts and expressions of teacher empathy; (3) empathy in context; (4) discourse of empathy; and (5) factors stimulating or diminishing teacher empathy. Also uncovered was an increased understanding of teacher empathy and the various contexts that affect it, including personal and social-cultural factors. Implications and recommendations are offered for policy makers, school administrators, teacher educators, preservice/in-service teachers, and future research.

Keywords: empathy; teacher empathy; caring; early childhood education; teacher education.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Human beings spend their lives relying on the concern and cooperation of others. Empathy is essential in any relationship and it has been related to positive outcomes within the context of early childhood education; however, these days, society as a whole and the schools that form its foundation are facing an ‘empathy deficit’ or ‘lack of empathy’ (Peck, 2012, 2014). There is evidence to support that an increase in child abuse is related to lack of empathy among South Korean daycare center workers (Hancocks, 2015) and that bullying among high school students is linked to lower empathy in students (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2011; Peck, 2012). These examples, and the dearth of research related to empathy involving young children, highlight the necessity for further study on empathy in the field of early childhood care and education (ECCE) and the development of a better understanding of empathy in teachers and children.

Empathy is critical for healthy relationships and overall well-being (Swan & Riley, 2012). By improving relationships with children through empathy, children are likely to be better cared for and teachers will be in a better position to address the needs of the children; eventually this will facilitate their growth as effective practitioners (Swan & Riley, 2012). Good teachers bridge the gaps between self, subject, and student in the fabric of life; they possess a marked capacity for connectedness (Palmer, 1997). When discussing connectedness, empathy may be considered as a foundation for understanding relationships. Beyond the ability to just listen to feelings, empathizing has a powerful influence on adults’ relationships with children (Swan & Riley, 2012). Tettegah and Anderson (2007) defined teacher empathy as the ability to care for, be concerned about, and to share the perspective or experience of a child, which involve both the cognitive and affective domains of empathy.

Definitions of empathy are complex and ambiguous (Cooper, 2002). Using existing literature, I clarify an operational definition of empathy that incorporates my own perspective. In general, empathy refers to the understanding of another person's emotional state or cognitive perspective in relation to that of your own. Empathy is often confused with sympathy, as both involve reactions to the particular condition or state of others. Empathy results in an emotional affective response that comes from the apprehension or comprehension of another's emotional state or cognitive perspective (Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinard, 2006a; 2006b). In contrast to empathy, sympathy does not include a shared emotion and perspective the others experiencing it. Rather, sympathy consists primarily of feelings of sorrow or concern for the other (Eisenberg et al., 2006a; 2006b). In this view, empathy can be explained simply as the ability to pay attention to, recognize, understand, and share the emotional state and cognitive thought another person is experiencing and having.

Along with this operational definition of empathy, one might primarily assume a positive relationship between empathy and resilience. Researchers have shown that the person with the ability to experience empathy are more resilient. Ee and Chang (2010), characterized empathy as a pathway to resilience; in short, empathy has an important role in our ability to develop resilience. Brooks and Goldstein (2008) also asserted that empathy is a major component of resilience given that an empathic person who has genuine understanding about the person's feeling and perspective tends to actively deal with disturbing situations, leading to increase the possibility of positive social relationships. These notions of empathy imply that caring professionals, practitioners in the field of early childhood caring and education who are able to empathize are sensitive to the contexts in which they work and more likely to thrive and survive within caring contexts.

The importance of teacher empathy and children's perceptions that they are cared for cannot be overstated (Bostic, 2006; Hallinan, 2008, Kohn, 2005; Noddings, 2005; Swan & Riley, 2012). In attempting to understand the role of empathy in teaching, it is crucial to identify empathy in a teacher (Swan & Riley, 2012). Yet, there have been very few studies dealing with empathy in teaching and understanding teachers' relationships with children through empathy in the ECCE field. Although it is identified as an important disposition for educators, there is relatively little research investigating teacher empathy in everyday school experiences and how this might enable positive interactions with children (Swan & Riley, 2012; Tettegah & Anderson, 2007). This dissertation study was designed to contribute to understanding the role of empathy in the professional development of teachers for young children by deeply exploring their everyday school experiences.

Moreover, recent research on empathy has focused mostly on the empathic abilities of teachers in elementary schools (Peck, 2012). For example, Cooper (2004) explored the ways in which empathic teachers play pivotal roles as moral models for students in an elementary school in the United Kingdom. Teacher's beliefs about, understanding of, and interactions regarding empathy may be significant factors that support the development of empathy in children.

Psychologist Alan Sroufe (1989) spoke about this at City University of New York in his speech,

'How do you get an empathic child?' He asserted:

You get an empathic child not by trying to teach the child and admonish the child to be empathic; you get an empathic child by being empathic with the child. The child's understanding of relationships can only be from the relationships he's experienced (as cited in Karen, 1994, p.195).

Thus, it is through the experience of being in a caring relationship that a child learns empathy.

For young children, in particular, these experiences happen within relationships with those closest to them – in the home with parents and siblings, and in childcare with caregivers, teachers, and peers. New studies need to be conducted in the area of early caring and teaching to offer various perspectives on the present literature.

Background and Statement of the Problem: Why Empathy in Caring and Education Matters

Overall, healthy teacher-child relationships in the context of early childhood education are essential relationships through which empathy can be expressed and examined. In this study, I explore preschool teachers' beliefs or perspectives regarding empathy and its representation in their behaviors and interactions within the relationships with the children in the classroom. The rationale for the research study is explained in detail below.

Over the last few decades, a number of surveys have shown that parents, educators, and the public are aware of the need for a wide educational agenda to not only support academic performance but also to foster children's social-emotional competence, character, health, and civic-engagement (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Metlife, 2002; Public Agenda, 1994, 1997, 2002; Rose & Gallup, 2000). Within this broad educational agenda, the healthy and supportive classroom climate may be considered a major factor in promoting healthy growth, development and learning with young children. Teachers play a crucial role in creating and maintaining such climates and relationships. In making strong relationships with children through empathy, teachers tend to model expectations about what it means to be a caring citizen in the world. In other words, a teacher's verbal and non-verbal interactions may have a strong influence on the management of a healthy and safe classroom climate, wherein children have the opportunity to develop the ability to care for and share with others. A healthy social and emotional climate leads

to feelings of being cared for and well, which influences all aspects of learning and development.

Teacher empathy as the key in the quality of teacher-child relationships. The teacher-child relationship is one of the foremost influences on a child's social, behavioral, emotional, and academic adjustment (Brendgen, Wanner, & Vitaro, 2006; Pinta, 1999). Unfortunately, if children have a negative relationship with their teacher in the school context, including experiences of verbal abuse (e.g., negative feedback) from the teacher, the children may not only miss out on learning opportunities; they may also be at risk for behavioral, emotional, and social maladjustment (Brendgen et al., 2006). *Verbal abuse* refers to behaviors such as ridiculing and teasing, name calling, or yelling at a child (Brendgen et al., 2006; Casarjian, 2000; Garbarino, Guttman, & Seeley, 1986; Hart, Brassard, & Germain, 1987; Olweus, 1996). For example, through suffering repeated verbal abuse, the fulfillment of a child's basic social-emotional needs may be denied or obstructed, thereby undermining healthy development (Brendgen et al., 2006). Based on evidence from existing literature, it is perceivable that teachers serve not only as educators but also as important socializing agents who satisfy their students' basic social-emotional needs, such as belongingness and self-esteem (Brendgen et al., 2006; Hart et al., 1987). Thus, in this study, I investigated how teachers respond to and interact with children through empathic understanding, including verbal and non-verbal interactions as well as conscious and unconscious actions, in the process of making a healthy and secure classroom climate that will fulfill children's needs and foster empathy in children.

Moreover, early educators are highly responsible for understanding children's needs and intentions quickly and satisfying these needs. In recent times, however, it seems that more children may have negative social experiences in the various contexts in which they live, work and play. Increased stress, pressure, and demands on children today have resulted in a serious

increase in childhood depression, health disorders, and antisocial behaviors (Brooks & Goldstein, 2001). Such undesirable circumstances may mean teachers are faced with a number of depressed or stressed children in their settings who are experiencing complex, difficult life situations. Teachers need to better understand emotional needs and how to address them, and to do so with empathy, they need to be able to share experiences and perspectives with the children. In doing so, teacher empathy may serve as an important pathway to better understanding and even preventing negative social experiences in school contexts (McGuigan, Katzev, & Pratt, 2003).

Teacher empathy. *Teacher empathy* refers to the capacity of a teacher to express concern for and take the perspective of a child; it consists of the cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains of empathy (Barr, 2013; Tettegah & Anderson, 2007). When applying the concept of empathy to the field of education, Zahavi and Overgaard (2012) defined empathy as to “experience the embodied mind of other, that is, it refers to our ability to access the life of the mind of others in their bodily and behavioral expressions” (p. 10). It is the intellectual identification with or vicarious experiencing of the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of another (Figley, 2012, p.264). In other words, the empathic response of teachers may be cognitive, affective, or behavioral. In addition, recent definitions of empathy also include an interactive component (Zaki, Boiler, & Ochsner, 2008) that moderates the perception and expression of empathy between individuals (Swan & Riley, 2012). Thus, Swan and Riley (2012) argued that a highly empathic person is skilled at decoding and inferring another’s thoughts, feelings, or behaviors and this ability can improve with familiarity, learning, and salience; these qualities are essential classroom skills.

Even though empathy is a significant disposition for teachers to possess to facilitate positive responses toward or interactions with children (Good & Brophy, 2000), few researchers

have explored the role of empathy in the everyday experiences of teachers in schools (Barr, 2013; Tettegah, 2007). The need for teacher empathy is based on the idea that empathy is the basic of foundation for any relationship, also key for successful growth in the classroom context. It serves as a basis for providing a healthy classroom climate to support social emotional development, and children's overall well-being.

Empathy deficit in the teacher-child. In attempting to address the need for empathy in matters of caring and education, it is useful to discuss an example, an extreme case of a student's negative experience in a school or caregiving setting. For example, increasing child abuse in childcare centers in South Korea is currently a major issue. Some teachers care for children in negative ways, either intentionally or unintentionally. In such cases, the negative emotional climate may be considered child abuse or maltreatment. The term 'abuse' may be integrated with the amount of active or passive actions and verbal and non-verbal communications that an adult inflicts upon a child under their care, resulting in a risk of harm to the child's emotional and intellectual development, and social adjustment (Minimata Zois, 2006; Theoklitou, Kabitsis, & Kabitsi, 2012). Emotional abuse and neglect are defined as caregiver-child relationships that are marked by patterns of detrimental interactions, requiring no physical contact with the child (Glaser, 2002).

Unfortunately, children's negative experiences with teachers are seldom discussed in literature on child abuse related to the teacher-child relationship. These instances of emotional abuse and maltreatment are also usually related to dysfunctional family systems rather than a phenomenon that can happen and be observed in school settings; however, the school or caregiving setting is the first place where some students may experience emotional abuse (McEachern et al., 2008; Nesbit & Philpott, 2002). It is a little known fact that reported cases of

abuse involving action by teachers represent only a small portion of actual cases involving children who have suffered abuse (Theodore & Runyan, 1999; Theoklitou et al., 2012). Yet, in some classrooms, it can be a daily occurrence (McEachern, Aluede, & Kenny, 2008). Students at all grade levels have been shown to experience emotional abuse by teachers in their classrooms (Conlee, 1986; McEachern et al., 2008). Children in schools are not immune to emotional abuse, which may come in the form of verbal and non-verbal interactions. Based upon the evidences from existing literature, it may be asserted that teachers, parental substitutes while children are in school, are caretakers of the classroom climate, and they must, in turn, act as responsible agents toward their students.

To prevent undesirable social experiences with teachers in schools, a teacher's empathic understanding may serve as a key for predicting their ability to form healthy relationships with empathy. With consideration for a teacher's mindset and behaviors, a lack of empathy might be associated with negative behaviors including child abuse or maltreatment (Cooper, 2011; Rosentein, 1995). Noller and Piekarska (1991, as cited in Piekarska, 2000) argued that research conducted in the 1980s in Polish educational institutions including kindergartens, preschools, primary, secondary, and boarding schools, discovered that emotional abuse of children and/or neglect were prevalent phenomena. Specifically, the abuse in their study was related to the teachers' attitudes and behaviors toward the children.

Teacher's empathic mindset and emotion in teaching. Just as it is essential to understand how teachers interact with children to form a foundation for healthy relationships through empathy, the mindsets of the teachers may also be important in understanding the ways in which teachers form these relationships with children. The concept of mindsets and the ways in which mindsets affect our behaviors must be understood (Brooks & Goldstein, 2008). Mindset

refers to the set of ideas that educators have about themselves and their children; these play a pivotal role in shaping their attitudes, expectations, teaching practices, and relationships with children (Brooks, 1999, 2001a, 200b, 2004; Brooks & Goldstein, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2008). Such mindsets influence whether or not teachers will have empathic understanding and responses toward their children as well as toward themselves.

Being empathic as effective educators. According to Brooks and Goldstein (2008), as effective educators, teachers should be equipped to assess and modify the mindsets that serve as obstacles to creating a positive school climate. *Empathy* is an essential skill for effective teaching and building relationships with students as well as parents and colleagues (Brooks, Brooks, & Goldstein, 2012). In regard to the characteristics of a positive mindset in educators, effective educators recognize that in order to relate to students, they must be empathic, always attempting to perceive the world through the eyes of the student (Brooks, & Goldstein, 2008, p.116). One of several characteristics of effective educators' mindsets, 'being empathic' is likely to be understood as a trait of effective educators because being it may be considered an essential part of quality teacher-child relations. In identifying the mindsets associated with effective educators, being empathic with interactions in the relationship may be noteworthy in understanding teachers' perspectives on children.

Within their mindsets, educators carry assumptions about children's emotions and behaviors into each of their interactions with others in their classrooms and schools (Brook, Brooks, & Goldstein, 2012). For instance, a teacher may be angry or frustrated with a child without understanding the root of this anger in the teacher's biased assumptions regarding the child's behavior (e.g., assumed intentional ploy to distract the class) or the child's own behavior. In addition, the teacher may not be aware of the fact that his or her annoyance is being

communicated through non-verbal interactions such as facial expression and tone of voice, and that these interactions may be perceived as negative, disapproving, and judgmental. In contrast, another teacher with the same child may understand empathically that the child's ongoing questions represent an attempt to understand the concepts or the material. Brooks and Goldstein (2008) argued that this latter teacher may be less likely to express negative verbal and non-verbal messages and more likely to provide empathic responding and assistance. Thus, it is perceivable that the mindset of educators plays a part in determining their attitudes toward children, leading to very different behaviors and responses toward them.

Emotion in caring and education. In addition to the mindset of a teacher, *emotion* in teaching should be considered in order to support the need for teachers being empathic. Emotions play a significant role in communication and engagement between people; this notion may be extended to consideration of the relationship between teachers and children in the classroom (Demetriou, Wilson, & Winterbottom, 2009). A number of researchers assert that teachers' work consists of dealing with children's affective, as well as cognitive, responses to the subject matter being taught, because teachers are commonly responsible for anticipating and responding empathically toward children's emotional reactions to certain tasks (Demetriou, Wilson, & Winterbottom, 2009; Demetriou & Wilson 2009; Frijda 2000; Nias 1996).

Emotion in teaching does more than merely impact children's social emotional development through building classroom climate and secure relationships. Indeed, it may influence the likelihood of successful growth for the children. Baird et al. (2007) investigated the relationships between emotion and cognition in teaching, pointing to the importance of a balance between affection and cognition for effective teaching and learning. They also suggested that teachers who build relationships with children in their classroom make the classroom climate and

lessons more interesting by incorporating more emotion and expression in their teaching. This means that emotion in teaching is more successful in communicating the subject matter and keeping children engaged (Baird et al., 2007). Beyond educational strategies, if teachers understand and share the emotional state or needs of a child, they are likely to care and communicate with them better.

Overall, considering the background and problems of this type of study, the primary direction of the research was to collect and disseminate data regarding teachers' beliefs, values, understanding, and practices related to empathy for dealing with young children's needs and emotions under the increased stress, pressure, and demands being placed on them today. Ultimately, this research investigated how teachers' empathic understanding and responses influence the fulfillment of empathy in the classroom.

Four core questions guided my dissertation research: (1) How do preschool teachers understand the concept of empathy and its role in their relationships with young children?; (2) In what ways do these teachers express empathy in their interactions with young children?; (3) Is there a relationship that can be seen between early childhood teacher's understanding of empathy and their observed responses and interactions with children?; and (4) What factors do early childhood teachers perceive may have supported or diminished their empathic abilities in caring and teaching?

Importance and Purpose of the Study

The importance of this study is rooted in an understanding of the importance of teacher's perspectives as a means to better support a sense of empathy in children. Such empathic children are likely to be more resilient as well as caring and prosocial with others, because of the considerable effects of empathic abilities and resilience in interpersonal relationships.

Why empathy is important for children. Empathy is significant for children because it may be a necessary prerequisite to developing emotional resilience, understanding social concerns as global citizens, and enhancing well-being in their lives. In regards to resilience in children, the construct of resilience (Garmezy, Maten, & Tellegen, 1984; Rutter, 1983; Wyman et al., 1999) may be used to explain a child's ability to develop well, despite challenges, stressful life conditions, or detrimental risks. Assuming that damaging social experiences are a likely occurrence for many children, empathy may be crucial for establishing a feeling of connectedness through supportive relationships that may help children to have more emotional resilience. Thus, teachers' perspectives on empathy and empathic acts are essential for helping children to further develop and practice emotional resilience through perceived empathy.

Emotional resilience refers to the capacity of an individual to generate positive emotions and recover quickly from negative emotional experiences (Conway, & McDonough, 2006; Davidson, 2000). A number of theorists describe resilience as an individual's ability to show positive adaption, despite challenges such as stress and adversity, rather than their ability to endure stress (Conway & McDonough, 2006; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990). According to Eisenberg et al. (2004, 2003), children with higher resilience have the ability to adapt to changing circumstances and use problem solving strategies flexibly after stressful situations and negative experiences. Prior researchers have concluded that resilience is positively associated with children's abilities to regulate and express emotions to others (Eisenberg, 2000; Eisenberg et al., 1995; Harper et al., 2012). Such recognition, regulation, and expression of emotions are prerequisites to displaying empathic responses toward others.

Teachers as contributors. Indeed, caregivers' empathic responses may influence children being empathic, a characteristic of resilient children. For example, children's resilience

is positively associated with parental empathic responses, thereby mediating the effects of children's resilience on children's emotional pain or distress (Harper et al., 2012). The Masten et al. (1995) study indicated that when children have supportive relationships with people in their lives, they tend to be resilient as they are faced with challenges or stress. To foster resilient children, it is equally important that teachers and parents have a highly developed sense of optimism, empathy and strong social and emotional competence (Ee & Chang, 2010, Knight, 2007). Conway and McDonough's study (2006) also verified that maternal sensitivity or sensitive mindsets during infancy contribute to children's emotional resilience during preschool, including lower instances of anxiety and depression in early childhood. Thus, empathic responses may be linked to caregivers' or classroom teachers' expressions of social emotional competence, resulting in enhanced empathy and resilience in children.

An organizational-developmental perspective (Egeland, Carlson, & Sroufe, 1993; Waters & Sroufe, 1983; Wyman et al., 1999) can be used to understand a child's mastery of developmental tasks in infancy and early childhood, including attaining emotional regulation and building secure attachment relationships. First, however, one should examine the caregiver-child relationship (Wyman et al., 1999). During this period, various salient risks or resource factors (e.g., caregivers' emotional responsiveness) are likely to obstruct or facilitate effective caregiving experiences within the caregiving system (Wyman et al., 1999). For example, responsive caregiving may mediate the effects of resiliency on adjustments through empathic responses. The result that emotionally responsive caregiving attitudes predict children's development under stress or challenging conditions suggests that a responsive caregiver has satisfied the child's needs or emotions, resulting in the child mastering early stage developmental tasks (Egeland et al., 1993; Waters & Sroufe, 1983; Wyman et al., 1999).

This perspective may apply to secondary caregivers (e.g., teachers) as well as primary caregivers (i.e. parents), thus responsive and empathic teachers attuned to children's needs are likely to foster resilient children within an empathic climate. Sensitive and responsive caregivers, who empathically read children's needs and respond as quickly as possible to them, contribute to the development of children's ability to be resilient in the face of any challenge, related to children's well-being in early childhood. Developing a capacity for resilience promotes children's mental health and well-being (Knight, 2007). Thus, parents and teachers who are sensitive and empathic are identified as significant resources for fostering children's resilience by requiring that the children empathize with others within supportive relationships (Knight, 2007).

Developing more empathic teachers. The purpose of the study was to understand the role of empathy in the relationships teachers have with children and its expression in their behaviors in the context of early childhood education. The focus was on exploring how teachers understand and express empathy and support empathic understanding in children. I also sought to learn about teachers' perspectives on empathy and what factors affected their perceptions and actions related to empathy in the classrooms examined. Understanding these various contextual factors may be easier to support teachers in their understanding and practice of empathy in the classroom.

Contemporary contexts for caring and teaching. Among various factors (e.g., teacher's inner or external factors), it is perceivable that teachers who are equipped with knowledge of "resilience" are likely to empathize better with children's emotional and social needs (Knight, 2007). The role of resilience in effective caring and teaching has been recognized by a number of researchers because the concept of resilience is located in the discourse of teaching as an emotional practice (Gu & Day, 2007). Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) (as cited in Ee & Chang,

2010), also posited that emotions are at the heart of teaching:

Teaching is an emotional practice. It arouses and colors feelings in teachers and students. Teaching not only involves instructing students, but also caring for them, forming bonds and relationships with them . . . It is a job where teachers repeatedly put their selves on the line . . . It is easy to lose sight of teaching's emotional dimension, of the enthusiasm, passion, care, wisdom, inspiration, and dedication that make many teachers great. (p. 324)

In regard to contemporary contexts for teaching, Hargreaves (1995) warned that, “teachers’ work is becoming increasingly intensified, with teachers expected to respond to greater pressures and comply with multiplying innovations under conditions that are at best stable and at worst deteriorating” (Hargreaves, 1995, p. 84). Nieto (2003) also found that “emotional stuff” (p. 122) was what had kept teachers going in the profession. She characterized teaching as intellectual work, involving love, anger, depression, hope, and possibility (as cited in Gu & Day, 2007). Teaching as emotional – and intellectual – work should be considered as a significant discourse for understanding empathy in caring as essential for well-being of all.

Empathic and resilient teachers. Nevertheless, the occurrence of job stress and burnout, predominantly among professionals employed in human service organizations, has been well documented over the last twenty years (e.g., Cherniss, 1980a, b; Dewe, Leiter & Cox, 2000; Howard & Johnson, 2004). Teacher stress and burnout are two separate, even if linked, phenomena (Howard, & Johnson, 2004). Stress is characterized as a negative feeling or emotional state; these negative feelings (e.g., anger, tension, frustration, or depression) may be perceived as threats to self-esteem, efficacy, or well-being (Howard & Johnson, 2004; Kyriacou, 1989, 2001). In contrast, burnout is described as a product of stress (Howard & Johnson, 2004).

In recent years, demands on teachers have increased, leading to rising teacher stress (McEachern et al., 2008), leaving teachers who are confronted with conflict situations in which they must empathize with the child's needs, while being aware of their own, for the well-being of everyone involved. Society expects teachers to manage the emotional lives of their students as well as their subject matter, this expectation may leave many teachers exhausted and burned out (Hagreaver, 1998; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). For instance, teachers are responsible for completing more forms and paperwork than before, as required by school districts or mandated by federal regulations (Cartwright, Cartwright, & Ward, 1995; McEachern et al., 2008). Also, today's teachers face increasing demands as growing numbers of children have serious behavioral problems as early as preschool (Gilliam, 2005; Jennings, & Greenberg, 2009). Indeed, teachers face adverse structural factors such as low pay, poor working conditions, lack of professional status, the conflicting responsibilities of teachers in childcare, and the physical and emotional exhaustion these responsibilities can provoke (Rosier & Lloyd-Smith, 1996; Sumsion, 2004; Warrilow et al., 2002). Such factors may influence teacher's mindsets and empathic behaviors.

Teachers under such stress often display behavioral patterns that have the potential for being abusive, including irritability, angering quickly, being frustrated and impulsive, and even yelling or screaming (McEachern et al., 2008; Nesbit & Philpott, 2002). Teachers who experience burnout are also less likely to exhibit empathy and caring behaviors toward their children; they have less tolerance for disruptive students; and they appear to be less committed to their emotional work (Farber & Miller, 198; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). In addition, teachers who maltreat children may demonstrate 'bullying' types of behaviors to gain power and control, thereby instilling fear and anxiety in their children. This means that they fail to communicate or

express care and affection for children, which may be considered emotionally abusive behavior, or non-empathic caring (McEachern et al., 2008).

On the other hand, teachers' behavioral patterns and interactions vary from person to person. Some teachers, who regularly experience more positive emotions, may be resilient even under stress (Fredrickson, 2001; Gu & Day, 2007; Jennings, & Greenberg, 2009). Sumsion (2003) used resilience to mean the ability to continue to find deep and sustaining personal and professional satisfaction in one's work as an early childhood educator, despite the presence of multiple adverse factors and circumstances that have led many to leave the field (Sumsion, 2003).

Resilience and empathy may be understood as closely related, interactive factors like as a revolving door, each influencing and being dependent upon the other. Under challenging circumstances, resilient teachers tend to be more empathic when interacting with children in supportive relationships. Resilient people are likely to understand others better and relate better with others (Ee & Chang, 2010). Similarly, Reivich and Shatte considered empathy as one of the multiple variables of resilience (as cited in Ee & Chang, 2010). Empathy is the ability of an individual to notice and recognize other people's subtle verbal and non-verbal signals regarding their psychological and emotional states; some empathic people are adept at interpreting these subtle cues of others (e.g., facial expressions, tone of voice, and gestures) and determining what people may be thinking and feeling, then greater communicating with others. Thus, resiliency may crucial for teachers be able to empathize with others, wherein children who are empathically cared for may be raised to be resilient in their lives.

Teacher's competence in relation to teacher empathy. Teachers' social emotional competence (SEC) may also be considered a significant factor in determining a teacher's

empathic abilities. In terms of the pro-social classroom model (Jennings, & Greenberg, 2009), teachers' SEC and well-being influence the pro-social classroom atmosphere. Socially and emotionally competent teachers contribute to healthy classroom climates through the development of supportive and encouraging healthy relationships with their children (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Socially and emotionally competent teachers' behaviors are related to optimal social and emotional classroom climates and anticipated student outcomes (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Socially and emotionally competent teachers have high self-awareness, thereby they are likely to be aware of their emotions to motivate learning in themselves and others (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). In this sense, teacher SEC also has implications for pro-social classroom climates and supportive relationships (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Many researchers support the view that students learn better when they are happy, respected, and feel cared for (Noddings, 2005). They also learn better when they feel attached to school and trust that the people at school have their best interests at heart (Bryk & Schneider, 2002), experiencing empathy from both their teachers and their peer groups. Thus, social and emotional competence in teachers is considered a major factor in creating empathic classroom climates.

In addition to a teacher's resilience or competence for being empathic, it may possible that unexpected factors (e.g., teaching experiences, constraints on the conditions in which they work, etc.) can affect empathy in the classroom. According to Cooper (2004), teachers who are continually constrained by their working conditions (e.g., large numbers of students, low frequency of contact) demonstrate less empathy or care toward their students, despite their overwhelming desire to support their students and promote their growth through empathy. Therefore, this study aimed to consider how to facilitate teacher's empathic ability in caring and teaching through understanding teachers' perspectives being influenced by various contexts.

Summary

As I began to address the specifics of a healthy classroom climate and relationships in caring and education, the significance and complexity of *empathy in the classroom* became more and more clear. However, too little research has addressed the understanding of teachers who might pass on moral values in their interactions with children through empathy in school. This study will explore the perceptions, beliefs, perspectives, and expressions of teachers, including an investigation into their ability to represent and support empathy in children, as a crucial component of their overall growth, development, learning and well-being. Next, the study investigated factors that may improve teachers' empathic understanding and interactions in the midst of increased demands and the contemporary teaching context. This should ultimately contribute to finding ways to support the caring and commitment of teachers, thereby improving the social and emotional growth of children and contributing to the advancement of early childhood education as a field.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This study was informed by three main bodies of research. I drew on literature that pertains to the following: research on a broad conceptualization of empathy and its development; research on outcomes of empathy development resulting from key attachment relationships; and research on teacher empathy. In the literature review, I discuss empathy-related responses in young children and their role in pro-social behavior, social competence, and adjustment. Then, the role of early experiences or interactions in the development of empathy is examined. Next, I present a review of research on the origins of empathy-related responses, including biological, hereditary and environmental factors. I close with a brief discussion on attachment perspectives related to teacher-child relationships, supporting the importance of teachers' empathic understanding in children's empathic-related responses.

According to previous research, socialization in the family, and more specifically parental behavior, has been considered an important basis for the development of empathy in young children. However, other social contexts, such as childcare centers and preschools also provide important socialization opportunities leading to prosocial behaviors foundational in caring societies. The role of these contexts in the development of empathy for young children has received relatively little attention. I attempted to fill this gap with substantive research on the topic. This will lead to a better understanding of how teachers, as socializers, provide opportunities for young children to develop empathy as well as insight on what factors influence teachers' views and their teaching practices about empathic understanding. This means that it is possible to make the educators or scholars perceive teachers as important factors of socializing empathy-related responses and behaviors in young children. This perception can be applied to

practical results to support and enhance children's empathy-related responses and behavior, helping to ensure that children develop into caring, responsible members of society.

In this chapter, I discuss each of the three areas of research in an attempt to situate this study within the existing research, while also clarifying the importance of this study. The discussion of literature is followed by a presentation of the theoretical framework for this study.

Empathy

Young children live in a world where they are exposed to increasing displays of violence and aggressive approaches to solving problems, with seemingly fewer models of tolerance toward and acceptance of others. Accelerating numbers of marginalized, isolated, and disaffected people are displaying more violent or aggressive behavior, both publicly and privately. At the community level, children are increasingly encountering instances of domestic violence, child abuse, child and youth violence, and bullying in schools (Gordon, 2003). In this period of major social change, empathy can be seen as a method of addressing social problems including aggression and violence. In other words, empathy can be a significant key for resolving social problems in positive ways. In addition, the ability to display concern for others and understand others' perspectives is an important feature of healthy social functioning and social competence. Empathic concern for others plays a pivotal role in enabling prosocial behavior towards others, and is implicated in the development of morality (Batson, 1991; Eisenberg, Fabes & Spinard, 2006; Malti, Gummerum, Keller & Buchmann, 2009; Roth-Hanania, Davidov & Zahn-Waxler, 2011; Vaish, Carpenter & Tomasello, 2009). Therefore, many researchers have been interested in identifying the roots and development of empathy. So far, limited early development of concern for others has been investigated, although some exists looking at empathy development during the second year of life (Knafo et al., 2008; Roth-Hanania et al., 2011; Zahn-Waxler et al., 1979;

Zahn-Waxler et al., 1992). However, relatively little is known about the development of empathy at earlier stages of life (Geangu, 2009; Roth-Hanania et al., 2011).

In this chapter, I describe the development of empathy in young children between the ages 1-8 years. I also consider the relationships and connections between empathy and prosocial behaviors and how these support the importance of empathy development in young children. Then, I address the development of empathy and contributors to this process including environmental factors as well as biological or genetic factors in young children. In particular, theories regarding to the relationship between empathic parents and children's empathy will be applied and expanded to include the relationships between teachers' empathy and children's empathy, based on attachment perspectives. Finally, I will discuss teachers' empathic understanding and actions that directly contribute to the development of empathy-related responses and behaviors in young children.

The Concept and Nature of Empathy

First of all, empathy should be differentiated from empathy-related reactions (e.g., sympathy and personal distress). With concern for the important differences between each term, Eisenberg and her colleagues (2006b) used the term *empathy-related responding* to include empathy, sympathy, and personal distress, although they sometimes also discussed them separately. After reflecting on Eisenberg and her colleagues' (2006b) definition, I decided to use this term *empathy-related responding* as a basis for defining empathy in this chapter. Empathy is viewed by some scholars as a potential psychological motivator to help others in distress, in contrast to a response to personal distress. In other words, someone must have intentionality behind an empathy-related response. However, empathy can be explained simply as the capability to recognize and understand another person's emotional experiences. In this view,

empathy is a vicarious socio-emotional response that is induced by the perception of another individual's affective state and cognitive thought (McDonald & Messinger, 2011). It involves feeling an emotion that is comparable to the one likely experienced by the other person (Batson, 2009; Decety & Meyer, 2008; Thompson, 1987; Eisenberg et al., 2006; Preston & de Waal, 2002).

The capacity to empathize is a substantial part of social and emotional development, impacting an individual's behavior toward others and the quality of his or her social relationships and social competencies (McDonald & Messinger, 2011). The classical psychoanalytic account of empathy as expressed by Fenichel (1945) is that empathy consists of two acts. The first is a degree of identification with another person. The second is an awareness of one's own feelings after the identification, as well as an awareness of the other person's feelings (Brothers, 1989). The ability to take these acts can be gained or developed as an individual ages and matures.

Empathy has many definitions that derive from a number of theoretical standpoints (Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987; Zahn-Waxler & Radke-Yarrow, 1990); however, the core concept of empathy can be defined as understanding another person's emotional or psychological state via both affective and cognitive processes. The cognitive process includes understanding the other person's experience (i.e., imagining oneself in the place of the other in an attempt to understand what the other is feeling or sensing), whereas the affective process requires the employment of an emotional state that corresponds to the other's emotions (e.g., sadness in response to sorrow, anger in reaction to anger, etc.) (Zahn-Waxler & Radke-Yarrow, 1990). Therefore, when someone else seems to be feeling distress, empathy involves feeling at least some level of discomfort, similar to what the other appears to be feeling.

Empathic arousal, which is one part of empathy, can induce a self-focused distress

response, often called ‘personal distress’ or ‘empathic distress.’ However, empathic arousal can also generate concern later, also called ‘empathic concern.’ When the person remains focused on the other in distress and feels for him or her, this situation can be related to empathic concern. Whether empathic arousal will lead to self-focused distress or concern for the other is related to the individual’s ability to regulate negative emotional arousal (Roth-Hanania et al., 2011). Also, this emotional regulation ability serves as a determinant of whether a child’s personal distress or empathic concern can be developed as they mature.

The Relation of Empathy-Related Responding to Prosocial Behavior

What parts of a child’s growth or development can be contributed to empathy-related responses and why is this important to study? Moral philosophers have discussed the constructs of empathy and sympathy for many years (e.g., Blum, 1980; Eisenberg et al, 2006b; Hume, 1975). Moreover, numerous psychologists have argued that empathy and sympathy play a pivotal role in moral development, especially as a factor that motivates prosocial behavior and inhibits aggression toward others (Batson, 1991; Eisenberg et al., 2006; Feshbach, 1975; Miller & Eisenberg, 1988). Although empathy has occasionally been considered to be a prosocial response, it has more frequently been construed as a mediator of other interpersonal responses (Barnett, 1982; Barnett, 1987; Feshbach, 1982; Hoffman, 1977). This view of empathy as a mediator, which has received the largest amount of consideration from developmental researchers, is arguably similar to the connection between empathy and prosocial behavior – empathy is probably an important mediator of prosocial behavior (Barnett, 1987). Many studies on the relationships between young children’s empathic tendencies and prosocial behavior have frequently used the Feshbach Affective Situation Test of Empathy (FASTE; Feshbach & Roe, 1968), considered an effective means of ‘measuring’ empathy. The use of nonverbal indicators of

emotional arousal in studies of the empathy-prosocial behavior relationship is becoming more widespread, and studies have uncovered some encouraging findings. In general, these studies have demonstrated that structured experiences promoting role-taking and sensitivity to the feelings of others can facilitate the expression of sharing, caring, and helping in children (Barnett, 1987). For example, Eisenberg and Fabes et al. (1990) sought to determine whether heart rates (HR) and facial expression as indices of empathy could predict prosocial behavior in young children. The data supported the conclusion that empathic concern and personal distress are differentially related to prosocial behavior, even in 4-and 5-year olds (Eisenberg & Fabes et al., 1990). In this sense, prosocial behaviors may be motivated by empathy and by concern about the welfare and rights of others. Thus, prosocial behavior could be considered an empathy-related response. It is conceivable that empathy is a strong motivator in eliciting prosocial behavior and it has deep evolutionary roots.

Hence, a more complete understanding of the early development of empathy in young children may be helpful in predicting prosocial behavior later in life, and it may contribute to determining whether empathy can be learned. Fostering empathy-related responding in young children may help to develop more caring individuals, resulting in more caring communities, based upon the views about the positive relations between the empathy related responding and prosocial behaviors.

Development of Empathy in Children

Empathy in children has been studied for a considerable time, however the theories that have emerged from this research have taken a different direction in recent years. Although early theorists argued that young children were either not sufficiently cognitively advanced or too egocentric to be able to experience empathy (Freud, 1958; Piaget, 1965), recent studies have

supported the argument that even very young children are able to display a variety of sophisticated empathy-related behaviors (McDonald & Messinger, 2011; McMullen et al., 2009; Zahn-Waxler et al., 1979; Zahn-Waxler et al., 1992; Zahn-Waxler et al., 1992). The typical stages of empathy development begin with newborns' and infants' personal/empathic distress reactions to distress expressed by another. Later, toddlers express empathic concern and helping behaviors. Finally, preschoolers make gains in cognitive empathy. It is conceivable that young children, even newborns, have 'the roots of empathy' that could potentially be connected to prosocial behaviors (Gordon, 2009).

According to Hoffman (1975), human beings have an innate capacity to experience empathy (i.e., to feel the distress experienced by others). This ability is the result of various fundamental mechanisms that are present from birth (e.g., mimicry, conditioning), with more cognitively complex mechanisms developing later on (e.g., role-taking). Within this view, Hoffman hypothesized human beings have a biological preparedness for empathy. For instance, the reflexive or reactive crying of infants in response to the crying of other infants, sometimes referred to as 'emotional contagion' is seen as an early precursor of empathic arousal (Hoffman 1976; Martin & Clark, 1982; McDonald & Messinger, 2011; Simner, 1971; Zahn-Waxler & Radke-Yarrow, 1990). Contagious crying reactions, or these early signs of emotional sharing in humans, may have relevance to empathy development later (Decety & Jackson, 2004; Geangu et al., 2010; Hoffman, 1975; Hoffman, 2000; Singer, 2006; Zahn-Waxler et al., 1983). Some researchers believe that these reactions diminish around the age of 6 months due to the development of several related factors such as increased emotional regulation or an improved capacity to differentiate between the self and others (Hoffman, 2000).

However, a study by Geangu et al. (2010) indicated contagious crying reactions may not

just be limited to the newborn period. Their data showed for the first time that there was uniform processing and reactivity to a conspecific cry throughout the first postnatal year, continuing well beyond the age of 6 months. Regardless of any disagreements about the ages at which contagious crying may occur, it can be suggested that infant distress reactions to the cries of another infant are not simply a reaction to the unpleasant noise of the cry; rather, this type of reaction may be a very early precursor to an empathic response. The specificity of reflexive crying in response to the sound of other infants' cries supports the idea that there may be a biological predisposition for taking an interest in even the negative emotions of others (McDonald & Messinger, 2011). A newborn is demonstrating contagious crying when, having been exposed to the sound of another newborn's cries, the infant manifests reactions of distress both facially and vocally (Dondi et al., 1999; Geangu et al., 2010; Martin & Clark, 1982; Simner, 1971; Sagi & Hoffman, 1976).

During the first year of life, infants are not yet aware of themselves as physical entities separate from others. The distress of another individual is therefore confused with, or perceived as, the infant's own distress. Therefore, very young infants' responses to others' distress is still limited to empathic distress; it cannot be interpreted as empathic concern (Roth-Hanania et al., 2011). Only in the second year of life are infants believed to be capable of experiencing true concern for others in distress, which can be understood as empathic concern (i.e., other-oriented empathy). During the second year of life, children learn to differentiate between themselves and others physically, and their emotional involvement in the distress of another is less likely to be due to a simple reflexive fusion of the self and the other as demonstrated by reflexive or contagious crying. Children come to understand that others are separate beings, and affective arousal experienced in relation to others' distress begins to transform into personal distress and empathic concern for the other (Hoffman, 1975; Zahn-Waxler & Radke-Yarrow, 1990). As young

children begin to differentiate the self from the other during the second half of the first year of life, their ability to self-regulate becomes stronger, and they become ‘other-oriented’ in the face of another’s distress, as well as to make more purposeful and deliberate actions. In other words, early empathy develops alongside the development of self-other differentiation, perspective-taking, and emotional regulation during the second year of life (McDonald & Messinger, 2011). Finally, Roth-Hanania et al. (2011) mentioned that empathic concern, beyond personal distress is an important motivator of prosocial behavior, helping, sharing, and caring behaviors, in young children (Eisenberg et al., 2006; Roth-Hanania et al., 2011).

During the second year of an infant’s life, age-related increases in empathic concern, hypothesis testing, and prosocial behavior begin to emerge (Knafo et al., 2008; McDonald & Messinger, 2011; Zahn-Waxler et al., 1992). By age two, all toddlers engage in some form of helping or sharing behavior in reaction to real and simulated distress, demonstrating that the quality of prosocial behavior develops during the second year of life. By age three, young children are able to demonstrate a variety of empathy-related behaviors, such as expressing verbal concerns and facial expressions indicating interest in another’s distress, while continuing to engage in helping and sharing behaviors (McDonald & Messinger, 2011).

As mentioned previously, empathy usually has both affective (or emotional), and cognitive components. These components develop separately and gradually as children age. Emotional or affective empathy is the vicarious experience of another’s emotional state, and children may experience emotional empathy in certain forms (e.g., contagious crying, emotional distress, or emotional concern) as early as infancy and toddlerhood. In contrast, cognitive empathy refers to perspective-taking, described as the capacity to accurately imagine the experience of another. Children demonstrate gains in cognitive empathy as they reach preschool

age. Furthermore, preschoolers' hypothesis testing when they review an adult's distress is positively related to their empathy and sympathy (Eisenberg et al., 2006b; Knafo et al., 2008). Thus, it is conceivable that the general increase in empathy-related responding appears to continue from an early age into the preschool and early school years.

Neurobiology of Empathy

As reviewed above, the ability to empathize typically develops early and rapidly, sometimes in a child's first year. Human beings have an innate ability to experience empathy, and it may be hypothesized that human beings have a biological preparedness for empathy. Moreover, it is possible factors other than, or in addition to biology influence young children's empathy, specifically, environment and experiences. Recently, neurobiology research has been providing strong evidence for the biological factors that support young children's development of empathy, adding additional credibility to the philosophical arguments for this theory.

Ontogeny of Neural System. The data reviewed below support the theory that empathy is biologically rooted in a triangulation of neural circuitry. Empathy links the neural circuitry for physical pain, social behavior, and the ability to represent both the self and the other (Shirtcliff et al., 2009). The ontogenetic roots of empathy likely arose within the mammalian brain to support the social bonds between a mother and child (MacLean, 1985; Swain et al., 2007; Shirtcliff et al., 2009). The neurobiological underpinnings of the mother-child bond, not surprisingly, include the *limbic system* (i.e., emotional circuitry). This circuitry was established to enable bonding between a mother and child, with some components long believed to be active only around the time of pregnancy and lactation. In this sense, safe and stable bonding between a caregiver and child can contribute to the positive development of the limbic system.

Insel (1997) also generalized the involvement of the limbic system with most forms of

affiliation and a variability of social behaviors, including empathy. Neuro-hormones such as oxytocin, vasopressin, and peripheral steroid hormones such as cortisol are important modulators of limbic activity. Central and peripheral hormones, including cortisol, help modulate limbic activity during stress (Taylor et al., 2000). Thus, empathy is associated with many brain areas, in fact, it tends to be mainly explained in the limbic system as a function of its root in bonding and affiliation (Shirtcliff et al., 2009).

Mirror Neuron System. There are several areas of the brain implicated in empathic behavior and empathy development. The human brain contains the *mirror neuron system* (MNS) and mirror neurons, which are not responsible for empathic feelings; rather, they are thought to provide a neural basis for connecting our own experiences with others' (McDonald & Messinger, 2011). The MNS is fundamentally linked with emotion-related circuitry (Carr *et al.*, 2003; Shirtcliff et al., 2009), and some propose that the MNS plays a pivotal role in social cognition by providing a neural mechanism by which others' actions, intentions, and emotions can be understood (Pfeifer et al., 2008). In order to create the capability to experience empathy, mirror neurons must communicate with many other areas of the brain. Different areas of the limbic system may process different types of emotional stimuli associated with empathy. For instance, the anterior insula (AI) and anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) are activated when viewing expressions of disgust, whereas the amygdala is activated when observing faces displaying fear or distress (Decety & Jackson, 2006; McDonald & Messinger, 2011). The ACC is also activated when individuals experience social rejection; individual differences in ACC activation are correlated with self-perceived distress (Eisenberger et al., 2003b; Shirtcliff et al., 2009).

In order to have the capability for advanced empathy (i.e. empathic concern) and not be personally distressed, the neuronal mechanism should be involved in emotional regulation to be

activated. To do so, the prefrontal cortex seems to play an important role in decreasing personal distress (Decety & Jackson, 2006; McDonald & Messinger, 2011). In addition, to distinguish personal distress from the advanced empathic concern, certain areas of the brain including the right temporo-parietal junction, the posterior cingulate, and the precuneus have responsibilities to differentiate between the self and others physically (Decety & Jackson, 2006; McDonald & Messinger, 2011). These processes help young children come to understand that others are separate beings. Furthermore, in order to experience perspective-taking as an aspect of cognitive empathy, areas of the frontal and parietal lobes involved in executive functioning must be activated, such as the front polar cortex, the ventromedial prefrontal cortex, the medial prefrontal cortex, and the right inferior parietal lobe (Decety & Jackson, 2006; McDonald & Messinger, 2011). Accordingly, as a child ages and his or her sense of empathy evolves from distress reactions to affective and cognitive empathy to advanced empathic concern, the related areas of the brain likewise grow and change. Recently, several studies focusing on the modulation of these empathy-related brain responses revealed that activation in these regions is not just fixed but can be dynamically modulated by several factors related to situational contexts or personal characteristics (Bernhardt & Singer, 2012). These situational contexts or personal characteristics may be understood as environmental or genetic contributors to influence empathy development; those contributors are interwoven with each other.

Contributors to Empathy Development

In addition to neurodevelopment factors, one of biological process, there are various other contributors to empathy development. It may be possible that genetic factors (e.g., heredity, temperament) and environmental factors (e.g., socialization, quality of parenting, relationships with caregivers) have an influence on early empathy development.

With respect to individual differences in genetic factors, Roth-Hanania's (2011) research has shown that the level of affective and cognitive empathy assessed in the first year of a child's life, particularly at the 10-month mark, is consistently linked to greater prosocial behavior in the second year. This indicates that early individual differences in empathy are significant predictors of prosocial behaviors, possibly because they reflect relatively stable self-regulatory skills (Roth-Hanania et al., 2011; Ungerer et al., 1990). Knafo et al. (2008) found convincing evidence of empathy as an element of stable temperament between the ages of 14 and 36 months. Likewise, the study also suggested that this stable disposition may be evident even prior to the second year of life (Roth-Hanania et al., 2011). For example, studies of contagious crying in infants (Emde, 1992; Simner, 1971; Sagi & Hoffman, 1976) provided evidence of a possible biologically based disposition toward emotional receptivity to the distress of others. Because theory and research have implicated early reflexive crying as a primitive precursor of later, more mature forms of empathic arousal that motivate action-oriented, prosocial behaviors, it becomes important to investigate the potential genetic sources of developmental transition (Emde et al., 1992).

Despite a common capacity to empathize at birth, individual differences in empathy may also be caused in part by individual genetic influences. Individual differences in early empathy are likely affected by a variety of factors, including infants' temperamental characteristics (e.g., sociability, irritability, regulation) (Roth-Hanania et al., 2011; Volbrecht et al., 2007; Young et al., 1999). Temperament is comprised of a variety of attributes that form the early basis for personality development. As temperament is believed to be present from birth and to have a biological foundation, individual differences in empathy based on temperament may also, at least in part, reflect genetic influences on empathy development (McDonald & Messinger, 2011). For instance, behaviorally inhibited, or shy, preschool children may display higher levels of empathic

behavior in familiar contexts; however, they may also be less likely to react to another's distress in an anxiety-inducing, unfamiliar situation (Cornell & Frick, 2007; McDonald & Messinger, 2011; Young et al., 1999).

Moreover, it may be possible that different behaviors (e.g., responses to the child's distress) demonstrated by parents and other caregivers may have an influence on individual differences in early empathy development (Davidov & Grusec, 2006; Eisenberg et al., 2006a; Kiang et al., 2004; Kopp, 1989; Roth-Hanania et al., 2011). Some children are more responsive to the needs of others in distress, and it is possible that child-rearing and disciplinary practices may account for differences in empathy development (Emde et al., 1992; Zahn-Waxler et al., 1979). For instance, children exposed to different socialization experiences are likely to approach subsequent developmental tasks pertaining to connection and commitment from quite different perspectives (i.e., they would have different working models of what it means to care for others and to be cared for by them) (Zahn-Waxler & Radke-Yarrow, 1990). Some studies of socialization approaches (Erode et al., 1987; Yarrow et al., 1973; Zahn-Waxler et al., 1979) have also focused on the early years and the role of the environment in shaping individual differences in children's patterns of responsibility. Parents begin to assume intentionality in their children, to hold them accountable for their actions, and to support interpersonally appropriate behavior (Zahn-Waxler & Radke-Yarrow, 1990) as a means of acceptance in society. Accordingly, as parents and caregivers have a significant influence on the *socialization* habits of infants and toddlers, it follows that parenting influences the early development of empathy (McDonald & Messinger, 2011).

In general, maternal warmth and stable attachments have been found to be an important factor in promoting empathy development in young children. For instance, toddlers and children

whose parents were observed to display more warmth toward them during a variety of interactions in their homes and in laboratory settings ultimately tended to be more empathic (McDonald & Messinger, 2011; Robinson et al., 1994; Zhou et al., 2002). Thus, it is conceivable that parenting and caregiving may be understood as meaningful environmental factors that influence the development of empathy in young children.

Today, many infants and toddlers receive care from parties other than their parents or immediate guardians while their parents are working or continuing their education. In fact, the number of infants and toddlers under the care of non-parental adults in childcare centers has increased in recent years. Consequently, more concern has been paid to the needs of young children, and this concern relates to how early childcare influences their development (Essa et al., 1999). Because all people have the capability to develop relationships with others and learn through these relationships (Edwards & Raikes, 2002; Josselson 1996), non-parental adults including caregivers, teachers, and directors of early childhood programs become considerable influences in children's lives. In other words, the stimulation and education provided by non-parental adults as they care for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers are meaningful because even socialization outside of the family context has the potential to permanently influence children's early empathy development.

Thus, an assumption I make in this research is that the various findings on empathic brain responses are also applicable to non-parental caregivers. These findings, as a whole, may be applied when considering the educational supports necessary to positively influence empathy development in early childhood.

Children's Empathy in Relation to Parents' Empathy

Although genetic factors influence individual differences in empathy, it is also possible

that parenting plays an important role in the socialization of children. Many researchers have explored parent-child relationships and their relation to empathic-related responses in young children.

The parent as a socializer. Clearly, empathy is related to important domains of children's functioning, such as their prosocial behavior, emotional regulation, and adjustment. In addition, it seems likely that socialization, as well as heredity, contribute to individual differences in empathy-related responding (Eisenberg, 2006b). Socialization in the family, and more specifically maternal behavior, has been considered to be an important basis for the development of empathy (Trommsdorff, 1991). Although there is evidence that some of the individual variation in empathy-related responding is due to genetic factors (Emde et al., 1992; Zahn-Waxler, Roinson, & Emde, 1992), children's observation of, and interactions with, parents contribute to individual children's differences in empathy-related responding above and beyond those due to heredity (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998; Zhou *et al.*, 2002). For example, maternal empathy (Strayer, 1987), maternal perspective-taking ability (Fabes, Eisenberg, & Miller, 1990), warm parenting (Barnett, 1987) and reasoning (Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, & King, 1979) are positively related to children's emotional responsiveness based on empathic responding. Based upon previous studies, it is plausible that more empathic parents are better able to read children's emotional cues and are more motivated to be responsive and warm, conditions that should assist with the development of children's empathy (Feshbach, 1987; Zahn-Waxler, 1991).

Parents' influence on children's empathy. Nevertheless, surprisingly, little empirical evidence exists for a direct link between parent and child empathy. However, Strayer and Roberts (2004) found that the link between parent and child empathy is mediated by intervening variables such as parental warmth, control, and encouragement (or regulation) of children's emotional

expressiveness by self or toward others. Namely, children's empathy is influenced by parental socialization, not just by their parents' empathy or personal characteristics. It may be facilitated by intervening variables such as parental warmth, control, and encouragement and it is developed in the context of the relation between parent and child (Strayer & Roberts, 2004).

Thus, it is valuable to understand how parents encourage or interact with their children regarding child emotional expressiveness and empathy, beyond parents' personalities. In theories involving childrearing as correlated to prosocial and moral development, parental warmth and responsivity are thought to promote children's empathy and prosocial behavior. This is because these parental behaviors give children feelings of security, control, and trust in the environment, which minimizes self-concern and further encourages consideration of others' feelings (e.g., Hoffam, 1982; Jassens & Gerris, 1992; Radke-Yarrow, Zahn-Waxler, & Chapam, 1983; Staub, 1979; Zhou et al., 2002).

In addition, Feshbach (1975b, 1978) examined the relationship of childrearing and parenting factors to children's empathy, aggression, and related positive and negative social behaviors. Feshbach argued that the determination of antecedent factors is an important clue for understanding the development and properties of empathy. The degree to which an individual has been understood or responded to empathically by others can shed light on the individual's future behavior.

Barnett et al. (1980) further explored the relationship between a young child's empathy and the parents' self-reported empathy, affection, and emphasis on other individuals' feelings in discipline and non-discipline situations. They found that the factors believed to enhance the development of empathy were reported to be more prevalent in a mother's interaction with the child than in the father's. This suggests that empathy may be identified as distinctly gender

appropriate for females, thereby enhancing its internalization in young girls (Barnett et al., 1980). In this sense, researchers and theorists have suggested numerous ways in which socialization agents (e.g., parenting or childrearing) may influence the development of empathy-related responding in young children – both girls and boys.

Secure attachment as a predictor to children's empathy. Moreover, in the attachment literature, parental warmth and responsiveness are viewed as important components for the development of a secure attachment between the caregiver and the infant (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Zhou et al., 2002), and secure attachment has been found to predict children's concurrent and later empathy-related responding (Kestenbaum, Farberber, & Sroufe, 1989; Zhou et al., 2002). In general, empathy has been linked to a high-quality relationship with the caregiving parent. Children with secure attachments may attend to and want to please their parents (Eisenberg, Spinrad, & Morris, 2006; Waters, Hay, & Richters, 1986), which may facilitate parental attempts to encourage empathy. In addition, the quality of parent-child relationships is critical to the development of a sense of connection to others and positive valuing of other people, characteristics likely to encourage sympathetic responding (Eisenberg, Spinrad, & Morris, 2006; Staub, 1992).

Indeed, the effectiveness of sensitive parenting and structuring in stimulating empathic concerns may be enhanced if this parental strategy is embedded in warm and trusting attachment relationships between parent and child (Van IJzendoorn, 1997). Several studies have documented that secure children tend to be more empathic toward others than insecurely attached children (Waters, Wippman, & Sroufe, 1979; van der Mark et al., 2001; Vreeke et al., 2003). Children who are securely attached tend to display more empathic concern toward an injured stranger as toddlers (van der Mark et al., 2002), and are relatively sympathetic and prosocial from ages three

to four (Eisenberg et al., 2006; Staub, 1992; Kestenbaum et al., 1989). Kestenbaum et al. (1989) also showed that children with stable, secure relationships with their parents were more empathic to their peers in emotional or physical distress in a nursery school playroom. In other words, non-empathic responses were shown mainly by insecure-resistant children. Because securely attached children presumably have had their emotional needs met when they were infants and have received responsive, empathic caregiving, they are more likely to possess the ability to readily respond empathically toward others (Kestenbaum et al., 1989).

Parents' empathic understanding. By integrating the ideas from these perspectives, it is reasonable to expect a positive association between parents' socialization, including parental warmth and responsiveness based on secure attachments, and children's empathic responding. However, a review of the literature reveals that researchers have focused on parental teaching and control methods, parental nurturing and warmth, and the emphasis that parents place on prosocial values, but that little work has been carried out regarding mothers' empathic understanding (Oppenheim et al., 2001).

According to Oppenheim et al. (2001), *empathic understanding* reflects emotional and cognitive maternal processes that take place when mothers are engaged in caregiving, and can be seen as the mental correlation of sensitive caregiving behavior. Also, maternal empathic understanding is a relational construct. Moreover, *empathic understanding* involves more than specific *empathic acts* (Oppenheim et al., 2001) or practices. This means that parents engage in caregiving behaviors that may not just be perceived by children as empathic, but rather reflect a more general empathic understanding of the child's emotional needs. It is plausible that parental empathic understanding, as revealed in parents' behaviors within an accepting and coherent frame is to be related to earlier security or secure attachment which contributes to the high-

quality of those relationships.

Attachment Perspectives on Teacher-Child Relationships

An attachment perspective, discussed above, is applicable to more than just the parent-child relationship. Researchers working from an attachment perspective conceptualize teacher-child relationships as extensions of the parent-child relationship (Davis, 2010). In the field of early childhood education, evidence has suggested that children do form multiple important attachment relationships, which can include relationships with their preschool teachers (Goossens & Van Ijzendoorn, 1990; Van Ijzendoorn et al., 1992). Teacher-child attachment relationships are in fact unique: They are not reflections of parent-child relationships, and teachers form qualitatively different types of attachment relationships with different children (Goossens et al., 1990). When they are attached to their caregivers, young children recognize them as secure bases from which to explore, and they seek them out when distressed; the child shares a special form of intimacy with the caregiver including the early childhood teacher.

Because children build attachment relationships with their early childhood teachers in a way similar to that of the parent-child attachment, it would be expected that these relationships would influence the child's social emotional competence. In addition, through their nurturing and responsiveness to children's needs, teachers serve to provide a foundation on which children can learn about their academic and social surroundings (Davis, 2010). According to the attachment perspective, Bowlby (1988) hypothesized that early attachment relationships should result in the generation of an internal working model of the self, of others, and of self-other relationships. By providing a framework for interpreting the behaviors of alternative caregivers, these models can work to potentially constrain the quality of future relationships. Likewise, there are many similarities between the parent-child relationship and the teacher-child relationship (Goosen &

Van IJzendoorn, 1990; Howes & Hamilton, 1992; Kesner, 2000; Pinta, 1992). Children may look to the teacher for the same sort of ‘emotional security’ that characterizes the sensitive, responsive, and socially supportive caregiving of the parent (Howes & Hamilton, 1992; Kesner, 2000).

Thus, research related to attachment theory asserts that children form attachments to significant adults other than their parents (Bowlby, 1984) and that these relationships influence children’s socio-emotional development (Kesner, 2000; Oppenheim, Sagi, & Lamb, 1988), including empathy development. Children’s attachment relationships with teachers has also been associated with children’s long-term academic achievement (O’Connor & McCartney, 2007). Consequently, these types of relationships provide a foundation and model for behavior upon which children can build social competence (Rudasill & Kaufman, 2009). It is conceivable that children’s empathy development is influenced by the quality of teacher-child relationships in their lives, based upon the presence of a secondary attachment. There is considerable research-based support for the importance of the teacher-child relationship as a focus for educational research (Pinta, 1998), but lack of research on teacher-child relationships using an attachment theory framework (Kesner, 2000).

Like mother-child attachment relationships, however, the quality of teacher-child attachment relationships is determined by the personalities and experiences of both the child and the caregiver (Grossmann, Grossmann, Huber, & Wartner, 1981; Main & Weston, 1981; Sagi et al., 1985). In addition, children’s attachment relationships with teachers can be truly distinctive. For example, among several factors, it is conceivable that teachers’ attachment history with their own parents may be related to the quality of the relationships that form with students in the classroom (Kesner, 2000). In terms of parents’ empathy, the determination of antecedent factors

is an important clue for understanding the development and properties of empathy, which is mentioned above. In other words, the development of empathy in young children should be understood as being based upon an attachment perspective that conceptualizes teacher-child relationships as extensions of the parent-child relationships. Thus, it is possible that teachers' empathic understanding with practices may be also related to the quality of the relationships, especially in forming empathic responses with children.

Children's Empathy Relations with Teachers' Empathy

By applying attachment perspectives to teacher-child relationships, it is possible that theories surrounding parent-child relations and their influence may be extended to teacher-child interactions regarding social-emotional development in young children. Much evidence has been found to support the importance of teacher-child relationships in *empathy related responding*, as reviewed below.

The teacher as a socializer. As mentioned above, socialization in the family, and more specifically parental behavior, has been considered an important basis for the development of empathy in young children. Likewise, the study of empathy-related responding and empathic behavior in other naturalistic social contexts including teacher-child interactions should also lead to a deeper understanding of empathy and its development. While research questions in the context of parent-child relationships pertain to the antecedents of empathy, it is in these other social situations that the functions of empathy and its linkages to other behaviors can be best illuminated (Feshbach, 1978). As can be seen in previous research on the topic, it is conceivable that low empathy is associated with social behavior problems (Chandler, 1973; Chandler et al., 1974; Feshbach & Feshbach, 1969; Feshbach, 1978; Huckabay, 1971). Thus, efforts to understand teachers' influences and enhance their empathic behavior should have important

pragmatic results for children's social adaption as well as providing a rich source of insight into the functions and various aspects of empathy (Feshbach, 1978).

Socialization of emotion. The various aspects of empathy, especially affective empathy, are related to a child's emotional competence. Young children's emotional competence has been investigated as an important aspect of their early success (Ahn & Stifter, 2006; Raver, 2002). Emotional competence refers to one's ability to understand one's own emotions and those of others, the display of emotions in culturally and contextually appropriate ways, and the capacity to manage emotional experiences and expressions (Ahn, 2005a; Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinard, 1998). Research has indicated that adult, specifically parent, socialization attempts affect children's emotional competence (Ahn & Stifter, 2006; Eisenberg et al., 1998). The role of the family, and particularly the parents, has also been acknowledged as a significant factor influencing children's emotional development (Eisenberg et al., 1998). Research on emotion socialization has been concerned with the communicative interactions (i.e., nonverbal and verbal) between individuals within family contexts (Lewis & Saarni, 1985). However, it is also plausible that other social contexts, such as caregivers in child care centers, provide important socialization opportunities and their role in the development of emotion, including empathy, has received little attention. In this dissertation study, I have attempted to address this gap in knowledge by extending the notion of the relationship between parent and child to additional contexts.

In general, findings from parenting studies support that parents who are responsive, warm, and accepting of children's emotional reactions, are likely to have children who are emotionally well regulated and responsive. In contrast, non-supportive parental responses to children's negative emotions have been associated with negative outcomes for children (Ahn &

Stifter, 2006; Eisenberg et al., 1998). The family is the first, but not the only, social context in which children become socialized (Denham, 2001). Like the parent, the teacher manages the emotional climate in which children learn about their own emotions and others' (Mill & Romano-White, 1999) from an early age. It is expected that caregivers and teachers also function as socializing agents of children's emotions (Ahn & Stifter, 2006), which is further related to the affective components of empathy. The importance of the teacher's role in constructing a classroom environment or climate within which children can strengthen their abilities to regulate their own emotions and respond appropriately to others' feelings (Hyson, 2004), can be related to constructing the component of empathy (e.g., affective empathy, cognitive empathy) in young children. Surprisingly little is known about teachers' or caregivers' contributions to the socio-emotional development of children (Denham, 2001). This environment should be a critical context to understand because of the increase in the number of young children enrolled in child care centers and the number of hours children spend in them (Ahn, 2005b). Meanwhile, teachers' empathic understanding should be also explored as a significant contributor to the development of empathy-related responses in young children.

What is teacher empathy? In these contexts, teachers' roles in the development of children's empathy should be perceived as a necessary focus of study. Teachers' successful performances have the potential to improve the quality of the educational process and thus contribute to the quality of society in the future (Zlatković & Petrović, 2011). Empathy is often cited as a very important characteristic of teachers, which enables adequate nonverbal or verbal communication between participants (e.g., children) of the educational process. Teachers' emotional competencies are essential for successfully carrying out the various professional roles of teachers (Stojiljković, Djigić, & Zlatković, 2012). Teacher empathy is the ability to express

concern and take the perspective of a child, and it involves the affective as well as cognitive domains of empathy; this conscious or unconscious process may involve an awareness of a child's feelings and the ability to put himself or herself in the children's place and feel what the children feel (Tettegah & Anderson, 2007). Thus, empathic teachers are revealed as highly moral individuals who attach themselves mentally and emotionally to their children and generate similar responses in return.

The degree of empathy shown by the teacher affects the degree of empathy shown by the children and the children's ability to share with and learn from others. Namely, empathic teachers model and facilitate an empathic atmosphere for learning and development in their classroom (Cooper, 2004). In addition, empathic teachers should show *empathic understanding* as well as *empathic acts*, which are processed by conscious or unconscious in the classroom.

Caring teaching and emotional labor. Taking the time to listen to children's problems or concerns, giving advice or guidance to them, and showing warmth, love, and empathic understanding are all examples of emotional work in teaching. Thus, emotional work is clearly one of the ways in which caring is built into the relationships between teachers and children (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). In terms of increasing empathic behavior in teachers, various factors can enhance or diminish both teachers' empathic understanding as well as teachers' actions toward children. For example, burnout occurs when workers "can no longer manage their own or others' emotions according to organizational expectations" (Cooper, 1998, p.300). Also, teachers' social emotional competence or emotional resilience affects their ability to be positive socializers of emotional competence (Denham et al., 2012; Perry & Bell, 2008) as well as empathy. In this study, I explored some of the factors may enhance or diminish the ability of a teacher to be empathic in teaching and caring.

Theoretical Framework

In addition to a consideration of attachment theory and its role in creating healthy teacher-child relationships, I considered the following four theories in this study: care theory, well-being for all, the pro-social classroom model, and empathy classification. Firstly, I discuss Nel Noddings's (1992, 1998) care theory, which provides a philosophical framework for understanding teaching as caring and the idea of empathy as being essential for reciprocal relationships. Secondly, I focus well-being for all in the schools as a motivator to create culture of empathy. With considering teacher-child relationship is reciprocal or mutual, teacher empathy which is sustained by healthy development and psychological well-being needs to be understood within environments, relationships, and experiences. Thirdly, I discuss Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) pro-social classroom model, which is a model of teacher social and emotional competence as they influence classroom and student outcomes, which was used as a basis for understanding how various contextual factors may influence a teacher's social and emotional competence, thereby resulting in the creation of a specific classroom climate. Finally, I discuss Cooper's (2004) empathy classification, which is classification of the findings of the key types of empathy might be expected to appear in teaching and learning relationships. Also, I discuss Cooper's (2004) constraints on empathy in classroom as basis for understanding the factors that influence teacher empathy.

Teaching as Caring

The relationship between teaching and caring is particularly important for early childhood teachers who worked attending to very young children's social, moral, and emotional development in preparation for later life (Devries & Zan, 1994, as cited in James, 2010). My study and questions regarding teacher empathy start from the assumption that teaching involves

caring which demands mutuality and relational ethics (Noddings, 2003). When Noddings (2003) described caring, she associated morality with empathy and the emotional closeness and understanding of others: caring is mainly responsive and reactive; in fact, it is even better characterized by the concept of receptivity.

Nel Noddings (1988), a leading scholar on care in schools, wrote about the construct as including both engrossment and motivational displacement. With regard to the caring relation, it is required that one replace his or her own needs and desires with the needs and desires of another (Noddings, 2003). For instance, the first member of the relational dyad (*the carer* or *the one caring*) responds to the needs, wants, and initiations of the second, *the cared for*. The carer mode of response is characterized by *engrossment* (nonselective attention or total presence to the other for the duration of the caring interval) and *displacement of motivation* (carer motive energy flows in the direction of the others' needs and projects) (Noddings, 1988, p. 219).

In any educational setting, a genuine caring relationship depends on a teacher's ability to identify, understand, and meet children's needs and desires and consider the other's point of view (James, 2012). From Noddings (2003), the concept of empathy seems to be central to the discourse of caring. Caring involves a 'feeling with' the other; Nel Noddings called this relationship empathy. In particular, the notion of 'feeling with' the other that she outlined does not involve projection onto the other, but rather reception (i.e., engrossment) that includes affect as well as cognition. This leads to the importance of the idea of 'receptivity,' to be open to someone's feelings and feel 'with' someone, to share a feeling or an understanding (as cited in Cooper, 2011, p. 22). Thus, caring with a focus on empathy refers to receiving the other into the self, and seeing and feeling alongside the other (Noddings, 2003). In the meantime, each member of the relationship mutually identifies with and cares for the emotions and experiences of the

others in the context of empathic caring and education.

Indeed, Noddings (1988) further argued that caring relationships are reciprocal and mutual in nature. As an ethical orientation, caring has been characterized as relational ethics. This is because human beings in relationships with one another inherently have some affective awareness of or connection with the other (Noddings, 1988). A relational ethic is rooted in and dependent on natural caring (Noddings, 1988). Accordance with these assumptions, it is reasonable to use the mother-child relationship as a sort of prototype, so long as we understand the context of the teacher-child relationship. Just as in the mother-child relationship, teachers care for young children with relational ethics and, in turn, they are rewarded by the evidence that their caring has made a difference in a child's life (see as James, 2010).

Well-being for All in Classrooms

Well-being in classrooms is a fundamental pre-requisite for healthy, productive and constructive quality teaching and learning (Lovewell, 2012). The overall developmental health and psychological well-being of young children depends on the overall mental health and well-being of teachers. By maintaining boundaries of well-being and self-care of teachers, in turn they may preserve empathic responses and interactions to children. Healthy development and psychological well-being are rooted in and sustained by environments, relationships, and experiences (McMullen, Buzzelli, & Yun, 2015), with a specific focus on the importance of care and education. For example, when teachers recognize and sensitively respond to individual children's personalities and temperaments, they can effectively work with each child's interests by keeping the child engaged and stimulated while remaining alert to challenges and conditions that may affect the child's health and well-being (McMullen & McCormick, 2015).

Unfortunately, it is hard for some teachers to deal with unpleasant situations or

circumstances albeit the importance of teacher's well-being as having an impact on children's well-being and growth. Unlike many other professions, teachers are constantly exposed to emotionally challenging situations and have limited options for self-regulation (Lovewell, 2012). Furthermore, learning and development are less likely to take place if the teacher cannot deal well with the child, even with limited communication (i.e., one-to-one). Such ineffective communication tends to be related, with no space for rapport building, happy relationships, and healthy interactions. As a result, teachers and children both lose room to grow, develop, and understand how to be constructive, productive, and supportive toward one another. In this study, the various constraints that cause problems for well-being are explored because they relate to the preservation of empathic responses and the ability of teachers to build partnerships with parents and family members.

The further assumption is that if a teacher has empathic understanding and acts to satisfy children's developmental needs and psychological well-being, an empathic classroom climate is created, leading to the generation of caring individuals, caring communities and a society. In this reciprocal and mutual context, both internal and external factors of teachers within schools and communities may serve to affect teachers' understanding and their practices related to empathy.

The Pro-Social Classroom Model

Empathy can be defined as the capability to imagine or feel another person's emotional experience. Empathy is a potential psychological motivator for pro-social behavior such as helping others in distress. The ability to empathize is an important part of social and emotional development, affecting an individual's behavior toward others and the quality of social relationships (McDonald & Messinger, 2011). To understand empathy in classrooms, Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) pro-social classroom model will serve as an additional important

theoretical framework to inform this study (see Figure 1 below).

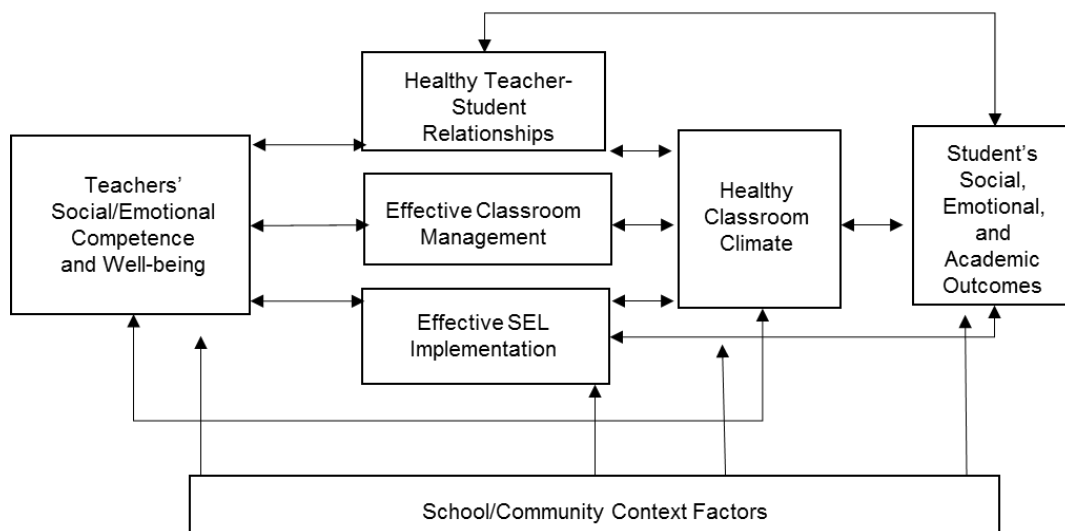


Figure 1. The Pro-social Classroom: A model of teacher social and emotional competence and classroom and student outcomes. Adopted from “The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence in relation to student and classroom outcomes,” by Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T., 2009, *Review of Educational Research*, 79(1), p.494. Copyright 2009 by the American Educational Research Association.

In this model, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) highlighted the importance of teachers’ social and emotional competence (SEC) and well-being in the development and maintenance of supportive teacher-child relationships. These factors contribute to a healthy classroom climate, thus promoting positive developmental growth among children. Figure 1 (above) illustrates a model in which teachers’ social and emotional competence and well-being influence the pro-social classroom atmosphere and students’ outcomes including their development and academic success. First, Jennings and Greenberg view teachers’ SEC as an important contributor to the development of supportive teacher-child relationships. For example, if a teacher has the ability to recognize an individual child’s emotions and can understand the cognitive behavior which is associated with these emotions, a teacher can effectively and empathically respond to the

students' individual's needs. This capability may be considered as a teacher' empathic understanding and response.

Next, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) asserted that a teacher with more SEC is more likely to demonstrate more effective classroom management practices; they are likely to be more proactive, skillfully using their emotional expressions and verbal supports to promote enthusiasm and enjoyment of learning and to guide and manage student behavior. Inevitably, conflict situations occur in the classroom within teacher-child interactions and within peer groups. A teacher who is socially and emotionally self-aware is more likely to self-regulate, making note of dynamic conflicts and handling situations in ways that respond to children's behaviors more effectively.

Third, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) proposed that teachers with a higher SEC will implement social and emotional curricula more successfully because they are preeminent role models of desired social and emotional behavior. In other words, teachers' social and emotional understanding fosters their capability to apply activities and lessons to everyday experiences as they naturally occur in the classroom, thereby creating a positive classroom atmosphere that directly contributes to children's social, emotional, and academic outcomes. Also, this positive classroom climate may reinforce a teacher's pleasure of teaching, efficacy, and commitment to the profession, resulting in creating a positive feedback loop that may help avoid teacher burnout.

Finally, the model in Figure 1 recognizes that various contextual factors, both inside and outside of the school building, may influence teachers' SEC. A teacher's overall well-being and efficacy as well as factors such as friendships, marital relationships, and various degrees of life stress in a teacher's personal life might also affect their performance of social and emotional

abilities in the classroom. Thus, this model provides an essential framework for investigating factors that may enhance or diminish a teacher's empathic ability in their relationships with children.

Overall, supportive teacher-child relationships and effective classroom management are related to positive classroom climates associated with positive social, emotional, and academic student outcomes (as cited in Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). To build supportive teacher-child relationships and a positive classroom climate, teacher empathy should be considered as a substantial factor in this equation, and teachers' beliefs regarding their understanding of empathy should be explored.

The Characteristics of Empathy in Teaching and Learning

Cooper (2004) demonstrated a detailed exposition and classification of empathy at work in teaching and learning. He asserted that empathy is highly reliant on the actors (e.g., teachers) and the context of the interaction. According to his project (Cooper, 2004), empathy was seen to be a varied and rich phenomenon, showing itself in varying degrees in different contexts. Figure 2 (below) sums up the findings of the key types of empathy that one might expect to see in teaching/learning relationships. Cooper's empathy classification may be applied to interviews and observations as one explores a teacher's beliefs, understanding, and responses to empathy in the classroom.

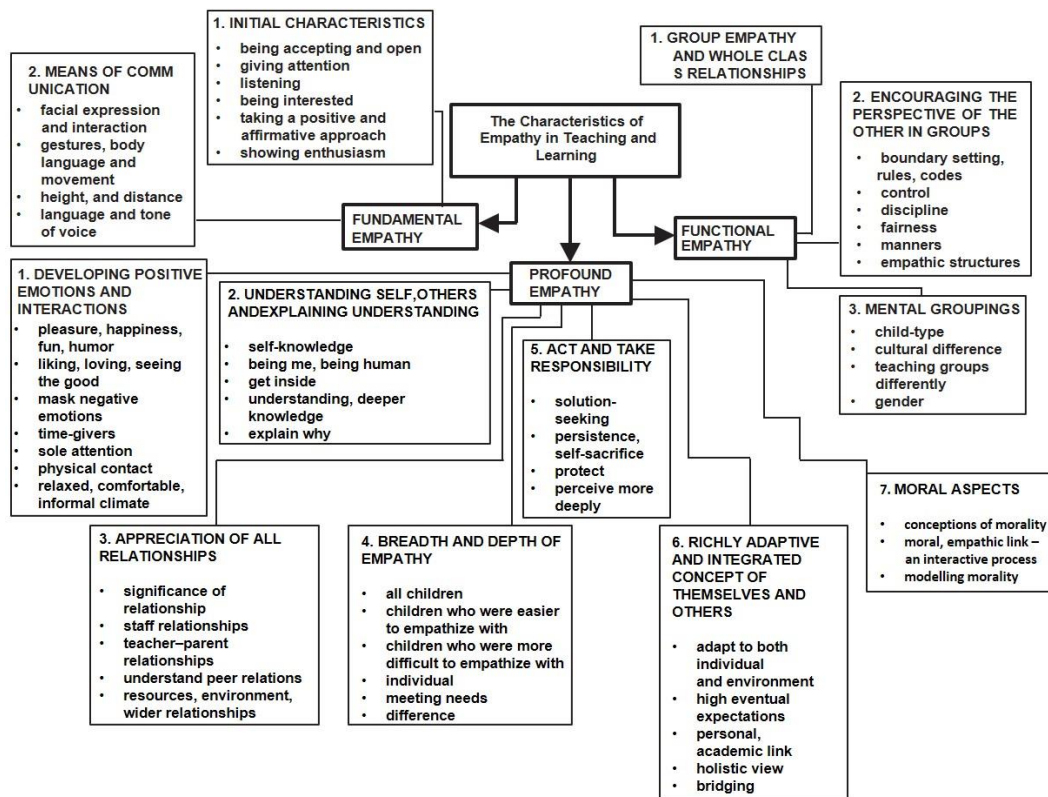
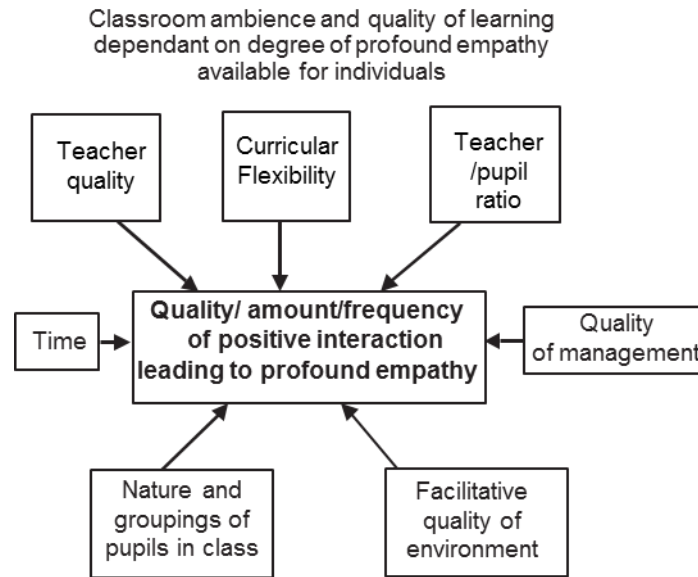


Figure 2. Empathy Classification. Adopted from “Empathy, interaction and caring: Teachers' roles in a constrained environment,” by Cooper, B, 2004, *Pastoral Care in Education*, 22(3), p.15. Copyright 2004 by the National Association of Palliative Care Educators.

Fundamental empathy is made of the basic characteristics and means of communication which are needed to initiate empathic relationships. Over time and with greater frequency of interaction, fundamental empathy can develop into *profound empathy* which incorporates a deep understanding of self and others in their social, historical and relational contexts, including the ability to empathize with *all* students and to take responsibility for their needs. The third type of empathy is *functional empathy*, which is in part a product of the working conditions in schools and it is closely linked to factors that act as constraints on empathy. The final category of empathy that Cooper found was called *feigned empathy*; it is excluded from Figure 2 because it was not seen in classroom, but rather discovered in the interviews that he conducted. Individuals

may show explicit signs of empathy, such as smiling or being enjoyable and positive but their motivations may be personal and the pleasantness may be short lived.

Constraints on empathy. Teachers can facilitate or impede their own abilities to empathize toward children under certain circumstances. As can be seen below, in Figure 3, constraints impeding empathy are created, to a great extent, by economic and competitive considerations, factors that may affect teachers' behavior or prevent them from treating children in a profoundly empathic way. Key factors found to be constraints were class size, time, curriculum, policy and management. For example, having too many children in a class was a significant factor that prevented individual relationships. Similarly, an over-filled curriculum and poor teacher/child ratios were closely related to lack of time and were frequently considered a problem that caused stress for teachers, leading to a lack in profound empathy. If more time is spent on enforcing rules, teachers have less time for individualize interactions important in attaching to their children, thereby resulting in difficulties promoting reciprocal empathy (Cooper, 2004). Constraints result in teacher responses that are less empathic, specifically, teacher's inability to demonstrate authentic communication or listening practices; they may seem disinterested in their students' needs, emotions, or behaviors (Cooper, 2004).



*Figure 3. Constraints on Empathy. Adopted from “Empathy, interaction and caring: Teachers' roles in a constrained environment,” by Cooper, B, 2004, *Pastoral Care in Education*, 22(3), p.17. Copyright 2004 by the National Association of Palliative Care Educators.*

Summary

All in all, empathy-related responding in young children serves mediators for the development of prosocial behavior and social competencies which form a critical foundation for an individual to become a caring member of society. Although biological or genetic factors influence individual differences in empathy, there are also several important environmental contributors to empathy development. It may be possible that both genetic factors (e.g., heredity, temperament) and environmental factors (e.g., socialization, quality of parenting, relationships with caregivers) have an influence on early empathy development.

Empathy develops at a very early age in various social contexts including child centers as well as in the context of a family unit. *Socialization* in the family, and more specifically parental behavior, has been considered to be an important basis for the development of empathy in young children. However, other social contexts, such as childcare centers, also provide

important socialization opportunities requiring consideration of caregiver and teacher behavior. The role of the caregiving context in the development of empathy for young children has relatively received little attention. Based upon attachment perspectives on the relationship between a teacher and a child, this study attempts to fill this gap with substantive research on the topic. Using the attachment perspective, this study conceptualizes teacher-child relationships as extensions of the parent-child relationship. This will lead to a better understanding of how teachers, as socializers, provide opportunities for young children to develop empathy as well as insight into what factors influence teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices about empathic understanding in caring and teaching. Thus, a major assumption of this study is that teachers serve as socializers, who take direct action in the development of a young child's empathy. At the same time, this study also will examine how teachers' beliefs and understanding regarding empathy are revealed in both their verbal and nonverbal interactions with children and what factors mediate these interactions.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This study was designed from a qualitative constructivist perspective. I gathered information from early childhood teachers to explore what they perceived and understood about empathy and how they express it in their work with young children. I conducted a qualitative case study so that I could gain an in-depth understanding of how early childhood teachers perceive, internalize, conceptualize and demonstrate empathy in their everyday interactions and relationships with young children. The purpose of this study was to explore how teachers' perspectives on teacher empathy relate to their behaviors and attitudes and to examine the resulting responses of the young children in their classrooms. This research sought to answer four core questions: (1) How do preschool teachers understand the concept of empathy and its role in their relationships with young children? (2) In what ways do these teachers express empathy in their relationships with young children? (3) Is there a relationship that can be seen between early childhood teacher's understanding of empathy and their observed responses and interactions with children? and (4) What factors do early childhood teachers perceive as supporting or diminishing their empathic abilities in caring and teaching?

In this chapter, I elaborate on the appropriateness of the research method and design chosen for this study. In addition, I also describe the site, participants, sampling, and data collection procedures of the study. Validity, reliability and limitations are discussed, as are data analysis techniques. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a summary of key points.

Research Method and Design Appropriateness

With consideration for the importance of the research paradigm, a qualitative research approach was most appropriate to addressing the questions of this study. Qualitative research

methods allow a researcher to explore any problem and gather a general understanding of a central phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). This method defines exploratory research and is used to understand the feelings, values, and perceptions that underlie and influence behaviors.

Additionally, qualitative researchers have stressed the importance of the “value-laden nature of inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.10). For instance, the central inquiry of this study sought particular meaning in the perception, understanding and demonstration of teacher empathy for fostering child growth within the field of early caring and education in South Korea. Thus, the qualitative research approach was suitable for this study as the perspectives and experiences of three different preschool teachers were explored in-depth through interviews, and the observation of teacher and child interactions.

Moreover, researchers, particularly social scientists, have widely employed case studies to examine real-life situations, issues, and problems, often finding that these cases may serve as the foundation for the application of ideas and the extension of what is already known through previous research (Yin, 2009; Stake, 1995). Whereas some consider ‘the case’ an object of study (e.g., Stake, 1995), others consider it a methodology (e.g., Merriam, 1998), a case study is an exploration of a ‘bounded system or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information that are rich in context (Creswell, 1998). To be specific, the interest, in case study, is in the process rather than the outcomes as they occur in context. In contrast to studies which focus on a specific variable; the intention of the case study is usually discovery rather than confirmation (Merriam, 1998, p.19). Additional, inherent characteristics of the case study made it well-suited for this research in that the goal is to study a particular phenomenon (particularistic), to use rich, thick descriptions of what has been studied (descriptive), and to advance our understanding and perhaps even discover new

meanings of the phenomenon (heuristic) in a bounded context (Merriam, 1998).

Thus, for this dissertation study, a qualitative case study approach was employed in order to develop an in-depth understanding of particular situations: exploring in what ways teachers expressed their constructions of empathy and describing how different factors influenced the construction of empathy that teachers perceived. Furthermore, in this study, the three teachers together were considered one collective case for study (Stake, 1995). The number of events or situations collected were cohesive enough to act as one case for contextual analysis, and I was able to successfully explore empathic caring and discover particular meanings related to teachers' understanding of empathy and its expression in their interactions with young children in their classrooms, as well as the challenges or constraints that might affect the development of teacher empathy in action.

To conduct a qualitative case study, the methods employed included interviews and observations involving human subjects (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). An interview is one of the most widely used methods for achieving qualitative information about people's experiences, views, and feelings of reality (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Interviews in the qualitative research of this story consisted of conversations between the teachers and myself, in which I sought to learn how they understood and perceived the concept, types, and characteristics of empathy in their teaching and caring work. Interviews were particularly well suited for gaining information from a small number of teachers (i.e., the three participants of this study). Because interviews are very time-consuming tasks, careful attention was required in order to select teachers who would have the professional knowledge or experience necessary to answer the research questions. Open-ended interviews, in particular, were deemed as proper tools for gaining detailed information concerning the range of possible answers. In addition to the interviews, observations

were deemed the most straightforward and simple method of discovering information. Through watching classroom scenarios, I was able to explore the various ways in which the teachers they acted out and expressed empathy under certain circumstances (Creswell, 1998).

Nevertheless, as Patton (2002) indicated, any research design has its weaknesses and limitations. For instance, investigating teachers only in the context of a classroom might not facilitate the direct discovery of other aspects of the teachers' abilities to empathize with someone outside of the classroom. Because of my somewhat narrow focus on one aspect, the teachers' ability to empathize, I might not have been able to comprehend other important aspects of their capabilities to support child development, academic success, and well-being. Despite such limitations, I conducted a qualitative case study because of its ability to fully capture the complexity of teacher empathy within various contexts. These methods were carefully selected by considering the purpose of the research and related research questions – I wanted to explore particular meanings of teacher's perceptions, understanding, and expressions of empathy in their interactions and relationships with children. In addition, multiple forms of data collection were used to minimize the limitations of each approach and, simultaneously, maximize the inherent strengths of each method (Patton, 2002). Hence, this study was organized, and the data were collected, analyzed and ultimately reported, in the form of a qualitative case study. Specific research design and additional information regarding the site, participants, sampling, and data collection procedures of the study are described in detail below.

A Description of Methods

Research design. This research utilized a qualitative case study design to study three preschool teachers at a single private preschool at South Korea. Merriam (1988) argued for a general approach to qualitative case studies in the field of education. Merriam (2009) said “the

defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case,” (p. 40) and gave examples of a bounded system including a person, a program, a school, a community, or a policy. A case study was conducted for this study because of the context of early childhood education and caring settings in South Korea. Although all preschool teachers in South Korea may experience the standardized national curriculum, identical government/district educational policies, or similar social/professional status due to being teachers, they may have different conceptualizations, internalization, and understandings related to empathy. This case study enabled me to explore how each preschool teacher understood teacher empathy and what factors influenced their understanding and practices with consideration for the various internal and external contexts of a bounded caring and education system.

In terms of the context of a bounded system, it is important to note that the social-cultural context of this study cannot be separated from the phenomenon in question. Yin (2009) pointed out that researchers might choose to use the case study method because they “deliberately wanted to cover contextual conditions, believing that they might be highly pertinent to [the] phenomena of study” (p. 8). Yin (2009) clarified this by writing, “a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, empirically when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p.8). Yin further explained that, in these instances where the context and the phenomena are interrelated, other research designs are not as well suited to study both in sufficient detail. Thus, the research in this study was shaped by the idea that South Korean teachers’ perspectives on empathy are facilitated by the interactions that they have with children that have acquired and constructed certain ideas and atmospheres from the greater South Korean society.

Sampling method. Typically, qualitative research utilizes smaller samples of

respondents than quantitative research and those respondents are often selected through ‘purposeful’ or ‘snowball’ sampling techniques (Howard & Johnson, 2004, p.403). In this study, a purposeful sampling procedure was used to select a specific number of possible teachers to participate. Patton (2002) asserted that purposeful sampling facilitates the researcher’s selection of a specific number of information-rich settings that suit the purpose of the research. This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Hence, this method confirms that participants were selected specifically and limited importantly because they were valid members of a certain group (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990).

Along with smaller samples of participants, the intentional selection of the teachers is used in qualitative research in order to understand the central phenomenon more fully (Creswell, 2005). Purposeful sampling was chosen in order to “illustrate characteristics of particular subgroups of interest [and] facilitate comparisons” (Patton, 2002, p. 244). In this study, a type of purposeful sampling, homogeneous sampling was used, which was the sampling of a particular subgroup that shared defining characteristics (Creswell, 2005). The subgroup in the study contained private preschool teachers within a metropolitan school district in the Gyeonggi province, South Korea. Indeed, purposeful sampling involves making judgments about the selection of participants based on theoretical and, to a lesser extent, practical considerations, rather than on the criterion of randomness (Howard & Johnson, 2004). Thus, unlike the purpose of random probability sampling, purposeful sampling does not generalize findings to a larger population (Patton, 2002). Rather, it enabled me as a researcher to gain in-depth information about a small group of individuals and this was in accordance with my intention and the purpose

of this study.

Site. I selected a private preschool in the metropolitan district, Goyang City, Gyeonggi province, South Korea, as the site for this case study because it held a number of practical and theoretical advantages as a site for study. Stake (2000) explained that researchers should lean towards selecting “those cases that seem to offer the opportunity to learn” (p.446). This private preschool offered a number of valuable opportunities. First, this private preschool provides a regular teacher training program that has a strong reputation for supporting teacher professional development, run by prominent professors and instructors. Second, this private preschool has a highly qualified director and many qualified teachers. For example, the director has doctoral degree of philosophy and education, is affiliated as a mentor of the Gyeonggi provincial office of education, and serves as an adjunct professor of early childhood education. Based upon her professional knowledge and experiences, the director is well-known for her work as an administrator of this private preschool and supervising and training the teachers who work within it. Third, this private preschool is recognized as highly qualified for enacting curriculum and policy at the school level. For example, this preschool was honored with an award for having the best preschool curricular management by the district of the Gyeonggi province in 2007, 2011, and 2012. Lastly, I accessed to this private preschool as a research site for study because I was a preschool teacher at this school. This experience at the preschool gave me good preliminary indications about the possibility of it serving as a site for this study.

In addition to the number of practical and theoretical advantages of choosing this particular school as a site for study, it was primarily chosen out of convenience as I had previously taught at the school and was already familiar with the context. Merriam (2008) mentioned that samples chosen purely out of convenience may cause poor information and lack

credibility. However, as I chose this setting for the reasons described above, certainly, this program represented higher than average quality and it was also a site at which I felt I would be more likely to be able to examine the phenomenon of teacher empathy.

In terms of the setting, it is undeniable that a private preschool is representative of the preschool system situation in South Korea where private preschools outnumber public preschools. For instance, in 2016, 75.8% of preschoolers in Korean attended private preschools, whereas 24.2% went to national and public ones (Korean Educational Development Institute, 2016). Choosing a private preschool as a site for study allowed me to understand and explore representative thoughts that the majority of preschool teachers may be expected to have in South Korea regarding teacher empathy, its challenges, and constraints to enacting it in their classroom.

Participants. The three participants in this study taught at Parangsae Preschool, which has five classes. The identified school district is located in Goyang City, Gyeonggi province, and is a metropolitan area located just outside of Seoul. Participants were invited to join the study because they were early childhood professionals who, at the time of the interviews and observations, were employed in private preschool settings, serving young children between the ages of 3 and 5 years. The research began by collecting letters of permission to conduct the study and letters of invitation with an attached consent form (see Appendix A, B) were sent out. Flyers were e-mailed via personal contacts to administrators at this preschool. After receiving approval from an administrator, I provided information related to the research to the teachers willing to participate in interviews and observations.

All of the participants were female and ranged between 27 and 29 years of age. One of the teachers held a master's level degree, while the other two held bachelor's degrees in early childhood education. They also varied in what stage of their career they were in, ranging from

having taught less than 4 years to having taught for over 6 years. The preschool was a private school offering a full-day program. All of the participants were preschool classroom teachers and worked with an assistant teacher in their classroom. One of the participants had a different role within the preschool where she also worked as a head teacher with the greatest responsibility for the management of the school (see Table 1).

Table 1

Overview of participants' demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Year of teaching experience	Educational level	Marital status
Lee	27	Female	4 years	Bachelor's degree	Single
Kang	28	Female	6 years	Bachelor's degree	Single
Moon	29	Female	5 years	Master's degree	Single

Backgrounds of South Korea wherein conducted the study. Setting the study in South Korea was particularly important and there was value in investigating the teachers' ability to understand the conceptions and roles of empathy and its acts with consideration for socio-cultural contexts. As noted earlier, a number of researchers have addressed the concept that empathy is a significant motivator to prosocial behavior in children and it is known to contribute to the development of resilience, which may help children to cope with stress and pressure. As social situations change, resilience in terms of managing stress and pressure is essential for gaining life satisfaction and subjective well-being, but it is worth noting that the relationship may be culturally bound (e.g., Diener & Suh, 2000; Park & Huebner, 2005). According to Park's

study (2005), for Korean students, *school* is crucial for gaining life satisfaction and subjective well-being. In contrast to Korean students, satisfaction with the *self* is more important for US students; thus, satisfaction with the *school* domain has a particularly strong meaning within South Korean society. Regardless of age individual children's lives seems to be strongly influenced by the teachers' management of the classroom climate and the school culture.

Moreover, these findings are consistent with the cultural differences between collectivistic and individualistic societies. Children from South Korea, which has a collectivistic culture, reported lower satisfaction than their counterparts in the individualistic culture of the United States; supporting the idea that the Western self is more fully developed than the self in more collectivist non-Western societies (Park, 2004). With respect to cultural contexts, the participants may confront the challenges and constraints of facilitating teacher empathy due to influenced collectivistic culture in the classroom, albeit the fact that *school* is a critical domain for life satisfaction for South Korean students.

Taking a social constructionism perspective, I assumed the South Korean cultural context may have influenced how the study's teachers had shaped their own perspectives on empathy in classroom. South Korea, emerging nations like China, India, and Indonesia, and traditional homogeneous societies like Japan place a higher value on harmony, tradition, social interdependence, caring, responsibility for the welfare of others, and community obligations over individual rights in comparison to Western societies (Hoffman, 2001). Looking at the positive side of this concept, Hoffman (2001) argued that the notions of interdependence, harmony, and caring in collectivist cultural contexts require that there be a fundamental connectedness of human beings with each other, whereby the sense of self and others is merged rather than separate and distinct. Nevertheless, teachers in societies like South Korea with strict conformity

may be unlikely to empathize with individual children's needs, or to do so differently than in cultures stressing independence and individuality. The reason is that collectivist cultures focus on in-group goals and social harmony rather than on individual personal goals or needs. This cultural context may affect teachers' understanding and acts of empathy, in particular in management of the classroom. In this research, the participants were individuals who were representative of the South Korean culture, and this context may have influenced how the participants shaped their empathic understanding and acts in the space of classrooms.

In addition to the cultural context, the social context pointed to the discovery of the participants' potential roles in the facilitation of empathy and responsive understanding toward children. The most relevant factor of each child's life satisfaction was seen to be academic stress, followed by school violence and negligence, but such dissatisfaction served as probable cause for why some children seemed to be maladjusted in their classrooms. Recently, the Ministry of Health and Welfare released the results of the 2013 Comprehensive Survey of Children in Korea. The survey showed that the life satisfaction of South Korean children is lower than in any other country in the OECD (the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development). The quality of life of South Korean children – as subjectively assessed by the children themselves – received a score of 60.3 out of 100, the lowest figure among OECD member states. It is perceivable that many children who are born and raised in South Korea are less happy. They are under a great deal of stress because of homework, exams, and other aspects of their schooling (e.g., school violence, negligence by peers, teachers), and they have little time to spend with friends, exercise, or engage in other hobbies. Indeed, in order to prepare for academic performances, children have to get tutoring for everything, even jump rope, in early childhood (Park & Choi, 2014).

Another unfortunate reality is that because South Korean students wrestle with stress (e.g., focus on competition, academic success), suicide rates among students are high. According to the National Youth Policy Institute in Korea, one in four students considered committing suicide in 2012 while the Korean Health Promotion Foundation stated that one in eight students considered suicide in the same year. In 2014, a recent survey poll by the Korean Health Promotion Foundation showed that just over half of South Korean teenagers have had suicidal thoughts this year, while nearly one in three said they had felt very depressed and also said that school pressure and future uncertainty concerned them the most (Kang, 2014). Thus, it is even more essential now that South Korean teachers do pay attention to and care for children's emotions, minds, and lives and work to increase children's feelings of life satisfaction and well-being than ever before.

Based upon these negative social contexts in South Korea, recently, the presence of maladjusted or challenging young children in the classroom has increased. Further studies on teachers' empathic attitudes and understanding have been called for by teachers who perceived that their relationships with maladjusted young children in their classrooms were conflicted (Chung & Lee, 2008). South Korean preschool teachers were likely to feel a responsibility to not only foster resilient children within an empathic classroom climate, but also to care for them empathically under the stress and pressure that children are faced with. Following the increasing significance of empathy education, national early childhood curriculum named as *Nuri* (the Ministry of Education and Health and Welfare, 2013) recommended that empathy should be efficiently performed by teachers in early childhood settings. However, most current studies on empathy and its applications in teaching and learning have been focused on either elementary, middle, and high school settings (Chi & Jung, 2015) or special education settings, such as special

teachers' or counselors' empathy and teacher-student conflict management (Gu, 2012). Furthermore, most of these studies consisted of quantitative analysis on the efficiency of the empathic attitudes training program (Chung & Lee, 2008). There is general lack of qualitative studies on empathy in teaching and caring as reflected by South Korean early childhood settings and a study on early childhood teacher's awareness of empathy for young children is required prior to beginning empathy education in order to gain an in-depth understand of teacher's perspectives on empathy (Chi & Jung, 2015).

As a result, with concern for cultural contexts and risky social situations in children's lives and the lack of studies on the topic, it was meaningful to explore the perspectives of South Korean preschool teachers' empathy and its demonstration in the classroom. As the most relevant factor of children's life satisfaction and well-being in South Korea is *school* life, the teachers are required to empathize with individual children's emotional needs and to cultivate an empathic classroom climate in order to increase children's satisfaction and well-being in their own lives.

Data Collection Instruments

A case study involves the widest array of data collection as the researcher attempts to build an in-depth picture of the case (Creswell, 1998). The data collection is extensive, drawing on multiple sources of information such as observations, interviews, documents, and audio-visual materials (Creswell, 1998). Utilizing broad data collection, I was able to present a matrix of information sources for the reader (Asmussen & Creswell, 1995; Creswell, 1998). Additionally, using multiple forms of data collection reduced the limitations inherent in relying on a single approach in a qualitative study, and allowed full advantage to be taken of the intrinsic strong points of each method (Patton, 2002).

Based on this perspective, data collection for this study took place over a semester, and included the collection of official school documents and teacher artifacts, followed by further participant observations and interviews. I collected data through classroom observations, open-ended interviews with three preschool teachers, and a focus group interview. After several weeks of classroom observations and individual teacher interviews, I invited the three participating teachers to participate in a focus group interview at the end of the study and asked them to share their perspectives on empathy. Specific questions were used to focus group interviews; these questions stemmed from ideas emerging from reviewing the data and from questions teachers addressed during individual interviews. Each source of data is described below.

Observation and teacher artifacts. Participant observation is one type of data collection method widely used in qualitative research and its aim is to achieve intimacy with a group and their behaviors and practices over an extended period of time (Musante & DeWalt, 2010). The purpose of my observations was to gain a broader understanding of the contexts which encompassed the teachers' caring work as well as to understand the ways in which they attempted to act out empathy. I conducted an initial interview with each teacher in which I asked teachers to represent how they experienced empathy in their relationships and how they constructed the concept of empathy in both their personal and professional lives. Through gathering demographic information and discussing their teaching experiences, I was able to establish rapport with the participants before getting into the classroom to more closely observe them. During these observations, I considered specific items from Cooper's (2004) model of empathy classification, which was used as a major theoretical framework of this research.

Participant observations included direct observation of a setting, providing several advantages to the researcher. For example, Patton (2002) asserted that observations allow the

researcher to explore the context where participants interact and to observe behaviors or practices that might be overlooked by people within that setting. The observation data were used to inform the interview data and the captured behaviors and attitudes of teachers were asked about that in the interviews (Cooper, 2004). By directly observing teachers, I was able to explore and understand information not directly provided to me during interviews, thus observations served an important function in the triangulation of data. This triangulation assured the validity, or trustworthiness of the conclusions I was making, because it used a variety of methods to collect data on the same topic. In addition to contributing to triangulation, direct observations were also used to capture non-verbal behaviors and interactions with children. As a result, I was able to witness and comprehend particular meanings from teachers' unconscious gestures as well as nuances in the natural situations between teachers and children.

To be specific, over 180 hours of lesson observations were carried out in total. Each teacher was observed twelve times over the semester, for 60 hours in each classroom. Making observations over this length of time and in each of the different classrooms and age groups, I was able to look at the similarities and differences between the participants. I directly observed each teacher in their classrooms with consideration for the children's different ages (i.e., from 3-year-olds, 4-year-olds, and 5-year-olds) in order to obtain a broader and more comprehensive picture of preschool teachers' understanding and behaviors. I looked for how teachers' understanding was reflected and uncovered in their teaching practices and interactions with young children in the classroom wherein both teachers and children experienced empathy. Being there for the full day in each classroom, I saw interactions that occurred throughout the entire day, both indoors and outdoors. In the meantime, I maintained a balance as an insider and an outsider, roles that meant that sometimes I committed to their activities while other times I

detached from them in order to maintain objectivity (Spradley, 1980).

While conducting such observations I took detailed field notes (see Appendix C). The descriptive field notes recorded during the observations were done according to the guidelines of Bogdan and Biklen (2003). The field notes consisted of portraits of the participants, reconstructions of their dialogue, descriptions and maps of the classrooms, accounts of specific events, and descriptions of everyday activities (Bogdan & Bikeln, 2003). Field notes were made before, during and after observations, and these were categorized into three key types, including the features, characteristic, and types of empathy identified in the interviews using Cooper's (2004) empathy classification. Further, these findings were analyzed according to the taxonomy of empathy created from the interview data.

In addition to the field notes, for each class that I observed, I requested that the teachers provide the researcher with any teaching materials that they used. These included a wide variety of teaching aids, resources, newsletters, and other materials that might reveal aspects of teacher's perspectives on empathy. I photocopied and assigned numbers to the artifacts for each teacher and used these numerical references in my field notes so that when I began to analyze the data, I was able to easily align them with the interview data and observation field notes. All of this data together formed the rich description portion of the case study.

Interview. Using multiple methods can help a researcher facilitate a deeper understanding of the subject in question. Along with classroom observations, data were also collected through formal and informal interviews. As shown in Table 1, interviews were conducted in three ways, including: (1) before observations about general teaching 'stuff' (e.g., biography, background etc.) along with an understanding of what empathy is; (2) a few weeks into the observation period, using visual components including photos and drawings; and (3) at

the end of the experience with the other questions, including specific examples of when and how they expressed empathy, challenges and things that might support empathy, and suggestions for other professionals.

In the three formal interviews with each teacher, I addressed several topics and employed different types of interview methods in order to explore each topic related to the preschool teachers' perceptions, understanding, and observed practices (see Table 2). The participants were interviewed individually using open-ended interviews with graphic and photo elicitation. Interviewing enables the researcher to enter into a participant's perspective and to learn his or her story (Patton, 2002). I also included a formal open-ended interview protocol (see Appendix D, E, and F) that involved the participants being asked the same questions, in the same order, permitting an easier comparison of the participants' responses (Patton, 2002).

Table 2

Interview methods and timeline for each interview content

Content	Interview Methods	Interview Timeline
Biography and background (e.g., personal and professional experiences with children)	Open-ended interview Graphic elicitation interview: Use of the timeline and the relational map drawing	1 st Individual meeting
Perceptions, understanding of empathy	Open-ended interview Photo elicitation interview: Use of drawing (e.g., mind-map, diagram of idea)	2 nd Individual meeting
Practices, challenges, and ideas to support and act empathy	Open-ended interview	3 rd Individual meeting

Throughout the data collection, interviews were conducted in person. The participants were asked questions from an IRB-approved qualitative interview protocol. All of the formal interviews took place in a quiet place in participants' classrooms or somewhere in the school building and lasted between 60 and 90 minutes per interview. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. These audio taped interviews were necessary for grasping the teachers' reflections on their understanding of teacher empathy as well as challenges they confront and supportive factors to expressing empathy. It also helped me to clarify my perceptions of the teachers' behaviors or interactions as demonstrated in each classroom. I took notes during the interviews to extend my comprehension of what was being stated and to assist with the analysis of data (Patton, 2002). I completed a summary sheet directly following each interview (see Appendix G). The summary sheets included an overview of the main points of the interview, initial thoughts, analytic memos, and questions that arose during interview; the summary sheets also were used as a guide during analysis on emerging data (Peck, Maude, & Brotherson, 2015).

Graphic elicitation method. The graphic elicitation interview method was used to explore three preschool teachers' biological information, backgrounds, and understanding related to empathy in the first and second interviews. Graphic elicitation methods usually involve the use of drawing timelines, relational maps and diagram of idea, which may either be produced by participants (Bagnoli, 2009; Prosser & Loxley, 2008). Previous researchers have pointed out the benefits of using the graphic elicitation methods during the interview. During the interviews with drawings, metaphors or symbols, the participants' responses may be very evocative and insightful (Weber, 2008), resonating with current theories and research on personal lives (Bagnoli, 2009). As the drawings should help to 'break the ice' during the interview (Morrow, 1998), this strategy encourages the participants feel more comfortable to interview and to reflect

upon their own lives and personal information (Bagnoli, 2009). In short, graphic elicitation methods were implemented in this study in order to help the participants to feel comfortable for talking about their stories and clarifying even abstract concepts on empathy as described below.

Timelines and relational maps. To understand the participants, researchers are required to carefully pay attention to others' own histories wherein the person shapes their own thoughts, perspectives, and behaviors. In this sense, timelines and relational maps helped the researcher understand why the participants had such perspectives on empathy and their behaviors. In the first interview, I employed the technique of drawing timelines in order to elicit biographical data in relation to time during the interview. Time is a crucial dimension in terms of the collection of data as it allowed the three teachers to reflect on different chronological dimensions of the past, present, and future in their lives. This method aimed to collect the most important biographical events as seen from the teachers' own perspectives (Bagnoli, 2009). I asked each preschool teacher to draw a timeline (e.g., horizontal, wavy, or vertical line etc.) starting from zero up to their current age indicating the most important events and moments that had happened in their lives and to include any events might have been significant to them. They were also asked to draw a timeline for their future lives representing their expectations and dreams about their future. This was done in an effort to connect the individual dimension of lives with the macro level of collective biographies; the timelines showed the participants' own interests and the social context of such interests such as family culture, background, and experiences, that had personal relevance to them (Bagnoli, 2009).

In addition to timelines, the relational map was used as a part of the first interviews. After giving a blank sheet of paper and a set of felt tip markers, I asked each teacher to draw themselves in the middle of the paper, and to show the important people in their lives, indicating

the different degree of their importance, by placing them closer or more distant to them. Because I was interested in exploring what patterns the three teachers would come up with themselves, I did not want to specify any definite structure for the map; they could draw any type of relational map (e.g., spider diagram, concentric circles structure etc.). The relational map helped the teachers think differently about empathic experiences in terms of their personal and professional lives, and helped to elicit information that might have possibly remained unknown and helped them overcome silence about some aspects of their biography and backgrounds (Bagnoli, 2009).

Drawing diagram. A qualitative research method that combines drawing and interviewing also enables the interviewees to display their perception of various situations. By using circles and lines, it is likely that possibilities, thoughts, interpretations and world views of the interviewees might become tangible (Zweifela & Van Wezemaela, 2012). In the second interviews, the interviewees' perspectives on empathy were not easily accounted for by words alone. The teachers were asked to draw a picture of the creature that they thought. Hence, when I utilized the integrated method of drawing diagrams (e.g., mind-mapping), it was easier to capture the interviewees' perceptions and understanding regarding their conceptualizations of empathy in their teaching experiences. As a result, this process of drawing diagrams contributed to meaning making, and more holistically as a communication tool between the interviewee and researcher and the metaphors that they used (Guillemin, 2004; Zweifela & Van Wezemaela, 2012).

Photo elicitation interview (PEI). Along with graphic elicitation, photo elicitation interviews (PEI) were also an effective way to understand the participants' experiences and meaning making (Frith et al., 2005). As a part of the second interview, I employed the technique of photo elicitation in which the participants were shown pictures (e.g., those taken by the researcher) and asked by the researcher to discuss the content of the pictures (Denzin & Lincon,

1994, as cited in Creswell, 1989). Photo elicitation interviews (PEI) can generate fruitful and complex data by stimulating people to talk about their thoughts, feelings, memories and experiences rather than just answering prepared questions (Tinkler, 2014). The use of images is not a new methodology but rather, it is one rooted in multiple disciplines including anthropology and sociology (Harper, 2000). In particular, photo elicitation interviews (PEI) is based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview, evoking deeper elements of human consciousness than words can provide (Harper, 2002).

In terms of the advantages of photo elicitation interviews (PEI), when a researcher designs qualitative research to pursue information from sources generally unfamiliar to the participants, picture elicitation can serve as an icebreaker (Tinkler, 2014) and encourage the participants to open the interview. In other words, photos may help to encourage dialogue and generate more useful data about concepts and topics that are difficult or sensitive to explore (Bagnoli, 2009). According to proponents of photo elicitation interviews (PEI) (e.g., Collier & Collier, 1986; Harper, 2002; Pink 2007, Tinkler, 2014), photos enrich the content of an interview by ‘building bridges’ between the interviewer and interviewee such as helping to establish rapport and shared understanding. For instance, photos enabled me to foster a relaxed atmosphere because they reduced the pressure on the interviewee. In this atmosphere, the photos acted as a ‘third party’ in the interviews so that the interviewees no longer felt that they were the center of attention, resulting in a greater focus on the photos (Collier & Collier, 1986; as cited in Tinkler, 2014). Rather, the photo interviews were recognized as being able to shift the balance of power in interviews, empowering the research participants and giving them more ‘authority’ (Clark 1999, as cited in Tinkler, 2014).

Based upon the above strengths, I conducted the second interviews with photo

elicitation, including small selected pictures that were presented in the second interview protocol (see Appendix E). As I held the second interviews, the participants were asked to describe these pictures (e.g., first impression) and reflect on their particular experiences. For instance, with the first pictures, the teachers answered the questions: please tell me about teacher empathy or authentic communication in teaching and about a child who is a difficult for you to be empathized with. Along with the second photograph, they were asked to talk about challenging situations for empathy, including the demand to provide a true emotional response or authentic communication. Following the last photograph that indicated current serious issues in South Korea, the teachers discussed an incident in which they had to stop themselves from showing negative discipline or feedback. This question stemmed from the idea that even teachers who have a remarkable capacity to ‘feel with’ others have times when they cannot behave that way at all.

Overall, I considered *multiple meanings, discontinuities, and discrepancies* (Tinkler, 2014) during the various phases of the three interviews. Bagnoli (2009) used graphic elicitation and arts-based methods, looking for the story told by multi-method coding, linking data collected through different and various methods. I was also able to understand ‘layers’ of meaning as the participants addressed their perspectives on empathy. Discrepancies and discontinuities may also emerge between a visual interview and a separate verbal interview, or other data (Tinkler, 2014). Similarly, interviews with visual strategy helped me to find what was more obvious while also allowing me to uncover what might otherwise remain hidden. Thus, using visual methods in my qualitative research contributed to a rich understanding of three teachers and their social worlds (Rouse, 2013). In the next section, the process of analyzing this data will be described.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of making meaning. It is a complex process that includes moving back and forth between the actual units of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive approaches, between description and interpretation, ultimately leading to the *findings* of the study (Merriam, 1998). My research included observation field notes, interview data collected through participant observations, and open-ended qualitative interviews with preschool teachers who taught in 3-5 year-old classrooms. I also built upon those observations and interviews with a focus group interview (see Appendix H). To look for particular meanings and a deep understanding of teachers' ideas and behaviors, all of these types of data were included in data analysis. In the following sections, I describe the coding and analysis process I used in the observations and interviews and I discuss as the thematic analysis, constant comparative, and first and second cycles of coding and analysis.

Thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is the most common method of analysis in qualitative research (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2011). The method has been widely used across the social, behavioral, and more applied sciences (e.g., education, health, and clinical) (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analyses move beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is, *themes*. (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2011). It is one of the gathering methods that places emphasis on identifying patterned meaning (i.e., themes) within the data with the hope of providing answers to the specific research questions and reflecting the purpose of the study as well as the initial problem statement. In particular, this method is suited to questions related to people's experiences, or people's views and perceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006), such as 'what do the teachers think about empathy and their expressions and acts of empathy?' This method is

also well suited to investigating questions relating to understanding and representation, including ‘how do teachers understand teacher empathy and its role in relationships and interactions with young children?’ Surely, these types of questions would require particular methods of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

One of the advantages of thematic analysis is the flexibility that it offers, and what researchers do with the themes once they uncover them differs based on the intentions of the research and the process of the analysis. Many researchers use thematic analysis as a way of getting close to their data and developing some deeper appreciation of the content (Boyatzis, 1998). This method also allows for flexibility in the researcher’s choice of theoretical framework. More specifically, it is important to note that while other methods of analysis are closely tied to specific theories, thematic analysis can be used with any theory the researcher chooses. With this flexibility, thematic analysis allows for rich, detailed and complex descriptions of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For these reasons, I used thematic analysis as a first step when looking at my research in order to look for broader patterns and themes as a starting point for deeper analysis.

Like most research methods, this process of thematic analysis can occur in two primary ways – inductively or deductively (Braun & Clarke, 2006). While inductive approaches are derived using a bottom-up approach to the researcher’s reading of the data, deductive approaches are theory-driven (i.e., hypothesis-driven) and derived from the researcher’s or other existing theories. In an inductive approach, the themes identified are strongly linked to the data because assumptions are data-driven (Boyatzis, 1998). Research questions in my study were better suited to exploratory research (i.e., content-driven) while the hypotheses better captured the objectives of a confirmatory nature. Thus, I employed thematic analysis with an inductive approach.

Following the inductive approach, I constructed and developed theories that were grounded in the data itself. For the current exploratory study, I needed to carefully read and reread the data, looking for key words, trends, themes, or ideas in the data that might help to outline the analysis, before any analysis took place (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2011).

To be specific, I identified themes through the process of coding in six phases to create meaningful patterns: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes among codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To familiarize myself with the data, I read and reviewed the data over three times; thus, I became immersed in and intimately familiar with its content. Then, I generated succinct codes that identified meaningful features of the data that might be relevant to answering the research questions. In this phase, I created approximately 90 initial codes through the data, assuming that the more codes I generated, and the better. *A unit of data* is any meaningful (or potentially meaningful) segment of data; at the beginning of a study the researcher is uncertain about what will ultimately be meaningful (Merriam, 1998, p.179). Lichtman (2006) stated that 80-100 codes would be organized into 15-20 categories, which were eventually synthesized into five to seven major concepts (as cited in Saldana, 2015). After coding, I searched and reviewed the candidate themes against the dataset to determine and examine how they told a convincing story of the data, and how this might answer the research questions. During checking of the candidate themes, some of them were split, combined, or discarded in order to refine the data set. Then, I defined approximately 20 themes (see Appendix I) and I worked out the scope and focus of each theme, developing a detailed analysis of each theme, and, further, I decided on an informative name for each theme. Finally, I weaved together the analytic narrative and data extracts, and contextualized the analysis in relation to existing

literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this phase, researcher's ability to show how these themes and concepts systematically interrelate lead toward the development theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p.55). Even if all of the phases were sequential, analysis was typically a recursive process with movement back and forth between different phases.

Throughout the six phases of thematic analysis described above, I also created and maintained a reflexivity journal for collecting and analyzing data. The reflexivity process could be described as the process of documenting close reflections of potential findings and implications of the research study. Reflexivity journals are often referred to as analytic memos or memo writing, which can be useful for reflecting on emergent patterns, themes and concepts (Saldana, 2015). When the observations and interviews were completed and I began the data analysis stage, I took notes from the field notes, interviews and transcripts. I took notes by writing down any words that were used during data analysis in a journal or notebook. Although the items written in this journal were not accurate or final, they contained considerations for further analysis. Researchers must take into consideration that analytic memos may assist them in the future coding of potential overreaching themes (Saldana, 2015). This reflexive journaling process assisted me in the final stages of analysis and throughout the process of data complication and reduction.

Constant comparative analysis. In addition to thematic analysis, categories and subcategories (or properties) were created through the constant comparative method of data analysis (Glaser, 1965). The constant comparative method of data analysis was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as the means of developing the grounded theory. Glaser (1965) described the constant comparative method as an analysis in which the data is first collected and constantly compared to indicators, concepts and categories as theory emerges. Tesch (1990)

adopted this view and asserted that the main intellectual tool is comparison and the method of comparing and contrasting is used for practically all intellectual tasks during analysis (as cited in Boeije, 2002). In short, this method is the *continuous* comparison of incidents, participants' remarks, and so on, with each other (Merriam, 1998). For the current study, I began with a particular incident from an interview transcript, field notes, or documents, and compared it with another incident in the same set of data or in another set (e.g., other teacher taught at different grade, other days of one teacher). By looking for commonalities and differences, such comparisons were strongly regarded as increasing the internal validity of the findings and were connected with external validity because they represented the same phenomenon (Boeije, 2002).

Along with strengthening the validity of the data set, the constant comparative method is associated with creating and conceivably proposing many properties (or subcategories) and hypotheses about *general* phenomena that form conceptual links between and among categories and properties (Glaser, 1965). For that reason, the constant comparative method of analysis has been adopted by many researchers who do not seek to build a substantive theory (Merriam, 1998). Rather, such development of categories, properties, and tentative hypotheses through the constant comparative analysis (Glaser and Strauss 1967) is a process whereby the data gradually becomes wrapped up in the core of an emerging theory. Thus, the findings from the study contributed to developing a theory with emerging ideas through the constant comparison method, whereby I was able to link the categories and properties.

In particular, the constant comparative method can be described in four stages: (1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3) delimiting the theory, and (4) wiring the theory. Following these stages, I started by coding each incident in my data in as many categories of analysis as possible. While coding an incident

for a category, I compared it with the previous incidents coded in the same category. After coding for a category perhaps three or four times, the researcher may experience a conflict in emphasis of thought (Glaser, 1965). For example, when I read and re-read through the transcripts of interviews and observation field notes, I put down notes, comments, terms and queries in the margins. Such notations became a part of the data that struck me as interesting, possibly pertinent, or meaningful for study. After working through all of the transcripts, I went back through my marginal notations and then sorted them and grouped them similar ideas. Also, I kept the list of groupings on a separate paper and then compared this list with the one derived from the first transcript. This list merged into the list of codes derived from raw data. Later, a final list established a primitive outline reflecting the patterns and regularities in my study; these patterns became the categories or themes (Merriam, 1998). At the end of this process, I had coded data, a series of memos, and a theory; the reflective thoughts in the memos provided the meaningful content behind the categories, which formed the major themes of the theory in this research (Glaser, 1965).

The first two cycles of analysis. Coding is not just labeling, it is *linking*: “It leads you from the data to the idea and from the idea to all the data pertaining to that idea” (Morse & Richards, 2013, p.154). Following *The Coding Manual for the Qualitative Researcher* (Saldana, 2015), the portion of data coded during the first cycle of the coding processes ranged in magnitude from a single word to a full paragraph or from an entire page of text to a stream of moving images. In the second cycle coding process, the portions coded might be the exact same units, longer passages of text, analytic memos about data, and even a reconfiguration of the codes themselves developed thus far.

When all 10 of the interviews and 36 sets of participant observation field notes were

transcribed and checked for accuracy, I conducted a first round of open coding for the interview transcripts, interview summary sheets, observations field notes, and research reflexivity journals (e.g., analytic memos). Each set of observation field notes, interviews, and interview summary sheets was printed and coded initially by hand. During the first cycle of coding, I used both a Descriptive Code and In Vivo Code at the same time. Descriptive Codes were presented as one-word capitalized codes to summarize the primary topic of the notes or field notes and interviews (Saldana, 2015). In Vivo Codes were used to note participants' own words with quotation marks (Saldana, 2015). Later, this information was transferred to an electronic codebook (see Appendix J), which contained the codes, a brief descriptions of the codes, and exemplar quotes from the data as they emerged and it was updated continuously during the analysis process (Saldana, 2015).

Coding is a *cyclical act*: rarely is the first cycle of coding data perfectly attempted. Second cycle coding methods, if needed, are advanced ways of reorganizing and reanalyzing data coded through first cycle methods (Saldana, 2015). After initially coding all of the observation field notes and interviews, *empathy, caring, and interactions* emerged as salient categories. Further, the second cycle coding processes was then managed, filtered, highlighted, and focused. The primary goal during the second cycle of coding was to generate categories, themes, and concepts as well as to grasp meaning and to build theory (Saldana, 2015). I continued to find repetitive patterns of action and consistencies in human affairs, and deliberate relations to the categories and subcategories of *empathy, caring, and interaction* (e.g., *sincere/authentic empathy, deficit caring discourse, and affection in learning*). One of the coder's primary goals is typically to find these repetitive patterns of action and consistencies in human affairs as documented in the data (Saldana, 2015, p.6). The raw, preliminary, and final

codes were cyclically recoded, reorganized, and categorized within the Microsoft Excel sheet (see Appendix J) to further develop a theoretical organization.

Conclusions in the process of analysis. Overall, while I looked forward to confirming the patterns and themes initially noted during data collection, I also pursued the categorization of additional patterns and themes as they emerged during the analysis, a form of inductive analysis. Coding is the main categorizing technique in qualitative research, and coding, or arranging things into like categories, helped to develop theoretical concepts (Maxwell, 2005). For categories, an inductive approach was used to lessen the effect of researcher bias. Pattern matching also was used to create coding categories with similar understandings (Howard & Johnson, 2004; Merriam, 1988; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Creating themes from the categories provided an understanding of the situation, the participants, and the ways in which they perceived their empathic roles in the lives of young children. Indeed, generating concepts or variables regarding teacher empathy from theories or previous studies was also useful for the process of data analysis (Berge, 2001).

In particular, these analysis strategies found the following common items: first, a general review of all information, often in the form of jotting down notes in the margins of field notes and transcribed interviews was helpful (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, as cited in Creswell, 1989). Next, I wrote findings in the form of analytic memos and reflective notes as an initial sorting-out process (Creswell, 1989). I sought feedback on my initial summaries and interpretations by taking information back to the informants – effectively member checking. I also captured the words used by the participants regarding any metaphors they used or if possible, I decoded and interpreted the participants' ideas into metaphors (Creswell, 1989). Later, in reducing the data, I created a display of the information including diagrams, tables, or graphs, as visualizations

(Creswell, 1989).

Due to the challenge of translating raw data into logical, meaningful categories or themes, qualitative analysis requires some creativity on the part of the researcher. For that reason, I was required to examine things in a holistic fashion; to interpret and make inferences, and seek a way to communicate my final interpretations to others (Simon, 2011). In addition to the researcher's role in being creative, I was also responsible for ensuring that my methods were not only ethical, but also truly and consistently measured in terms of the idea or related construction questions that are discussed in the next section.

Validity and Reliability

Multiple perspectives exist relating to the importance of verification in qualitative research, the definition of it, and procedures for establishing it (Creswell, 1998). Lincoln and Guba (1985) used alternative terms that apply more to naturalistic research. To address the trustworthiness of this research, I used the criteria established by Lincoln and Guba (1985): 'credibility,' 'transferability,' 'dependability,' and 'confirmability' for 'internal validity,' 'external validity,' 'reliability,' and 'objectivity.' Several strategies were used to strengthen the trustworthiness and rigor of this study: these included triangulation, peer-debriefing or review, member checking, analytic memo writing, and the creation of an audit trail, as described below.

Credibility. The main criterion of qualitative research, credibility, and associates with internal validity requires that the researcher ensure, as much as possible, that the findings are accurate and credible. Internal validity deals with the questions of how research findings match reality (Merriam, 1998). If qualitative research demonstrates multiple realities regarding a fundamental phenomenon and accurately reports the perspectives of participants, the research can be said to have credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used strategies to enhance credibility,

internal validity such as triangulation, member checking, and peer examination (Merriam, 1998). As I collected data, interviews in person were electronically audio-recorded and later transcribed so that no data would be lost or missed. Such multiple data sources allowed for data triangulation (Merriam, 1998). In this study, as mentioned earlier, triangulation of data was achieved through comparing information from multiple sources (e.g., observation field notes, interview transcripts, interview summary sheets, memos, reflective journals). Next, member checking was also used (Miles & Huberman, 1994). After collecting data from interviews and observations, I went back to each participant and asked them to check the accuracy of these data. This provided them with not only an opportunity to check the data for accuracy, but it gave them the power to provide feedback for revising any inaccuracies. Later, I also included a search for discrepant data and initial interpretations by asking colleagues to review and comment on the findings, thus increasing credibility through evidenced interpretation.

Transferability. Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings of qualitative research can be applied to a new situation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability coincides with external validity in that it is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be utilized to other situations (Merriam, 1998). Above all, rich and thick descriptions permit the reader to decide the degree regarding transferability because the researcher describes in detail the participants or setting under study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). In other words, with such detailed descriptions, the researcher helps readers to transfer information to other settings because of similar characteristics. For instance, I focused on the fact that the research context that was dominant to the current research study, including background information on the participants used, was described in full detail in the portion of the study where I described the participants and the setting of the study. Also, through the literature review, the assumptions that

were principal to the current research study were outlined in full detail. As a result, it is possible that other teachers, teacher educators, and preschool administrators may acquire knowledge or information regarding the teachers with whom they work, and thus the findings of this study will be transferable.

Dependability. Dependability refers to the extent to which research findings are replicable or repeatable (Merriam, 1998). Given the nature of qualitative research, the criterion of dependability is more appropriate, which emphasizes *consistency* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The reason is that qualitative researchers seek to describe and explain the world as those in the world experience it (Merriam, 1998, p.205). In qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.288) suggested thinking about the “dependability” or “consistency” of the results obtained from the data; that is, rather than demanding that outsiders get the same results, a researcher wishes that outsiders might concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense—they are consistent and dependable. Certainly, transparency of the method is increased through maintaining a record of all data notations, analysis and interpretation (Merriam, 1998). To enhance dependability, I used an audit of inquiry throughout the research process: this included the coding process and choices made through analysis; how the inquiry process changed and was formed; and emerging patterns of codes, concepts, and themes in the data (Peck, Maude, & Brotherson, 2015; Saldana, 2015). Such content in an audit trail was kept by saving daily electronic work. Indeed, triangulation strengthened reliability as well as internal validity (Merriam, 1998). In addition to comparing information from multiple sources, participants were asked follow up questions to make sure that inquiry occurred, and to ensure their background information was consistent.

Confirmability. In qualitative research, the researcher has a tendency to take a unique

perspective to the study. In this sense, confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed by or corroborated by others (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted that confirmability is enhanced when research interpretations are provided in a neutral manner. I used triangulation and member checking in order to confirm the findings as well as to validate them (Creswell, 1998). In triangulation, I used multiple and different sources, methods, and theories to provide corroborating evidence (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). This process contained corroborating evidence from different sources to cast a light upon themes or perspectives (Creswell, 1998). Member checking was also used to ensure confirmability. After transcribing the audio-recorded interviews and classroom observations, participants were provided with a copy of the transcript and asked to check what I had observed so that they could confirm the accuracy of the account. Through these approaches, I attempted to avoid researcher bias, personal perceptions, and limited perspectives.

Ethical considerations

Concerns about validity and reliability are common to all forms of research, as is the concern that the investigation be conducted in an ethical manner. In any qualitative research, ethical issues pertaining to the protection of the participants are of concern (Merriam, 1998). As a researcher, I attempted to give considerable attention to protecting the participants in this study through the design of the study, confidentiality, and the process of informed content. It was important to me first to achieve data collection in a way that was respectful of the participants. In the sense, the purpose of the research, research questions and dissertation proposal abstract were shared with each participant so that they could clearly understand what they were going to participate in (see Appendix K, L and M). It was also significant to protect the identities of the participants so that no professional harm would come to them through the research and to respect

their workplace when I observed their class.

Moreover, maintaining the confidentiality and privacy of the teachers was a priority throughout all phases of this study. A letter assuring confidentiality was given to participants together with consent forms (see Appendix L). Confidentiality was indicated in the participant consent forms with a statement describing that the participants' real names would not be revealed. Pseudonyms were used and their identities and experiences were protected. In this letter, I assured the participants that I would protect their confidentiality in every step of the research process, and any information, either personal or related to the interview questions, was protected. Interview audio files, field notes, and other documents were stored in a secure location off-site. This study also ensured confidentiality and privacy by utilizing identification numbers rather than names for data collection, coding of all responses, eliminating all potentially identifying information. All consent forms and interview transcripts will be stored in a secured and locked location prior to destroying them within three years.

Lastly, the informed consent was reported by using consent forms that were reviewed and required by the IRB (see Appendix K). At the beginning of the study, the participants were requested to sign consent forms prior to their participation. Participants were informed that their involvement was completely voluntary and they could withdraw whenever they wanted to. In the first meeting for the introduction of research, the consent forms were comprehensively explained including an explanation of any concerns or benefits that participants might experience. Through this process, I gave time for the participants to ask any questions before signing to participate in this study.

Limitations

There were a few limitations in this study including my subjectivity and potential bias, a

lack of diversity among participants, the absence of teacher-self-reflectivity, and a lack of validation from children. One of the primary limitations of this study was my subjectivity and potential bias as a researcher. For example, the observation notes of the teachers' behaviors were not fully unbiased descriptions; these were unavoidably influenced by my personal beliefs and world view of what was relevant and important in terms of collecting and interpreting data (Schwartz & Schwartz, 1955). Thus, researchers must especially take into account their own *position* in relation to the research participants and research setting in order to offer the readers better tools for understanding the dynamics of researching (England, 1994; Rose, 1997; Merriam et al., 2001). Positionality allows for a narrative placement for researcher objectivity and subjectivity whereby the researcher is situated within the many aspects of perspective and positionality (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

In terms of positionality, I have been a preschool teacher in the same workplace wherein the participants taught. When I worked as a preschool teacher, I often experienced 'empathy fatigue' albeit loving the young children. Such teaching experiences and my educational background led to me inquiring about how the teachers constructed their understanding and perspectives on teacher empathy and its role in their relationships with young children. Furthermore, my background in teaching and caring contributed to my concern about how to improve teacher empathy in teaching and caring. Based on similar previous teaching experiences, I could seriously empathize with the participants and paid careful attention to their voices on this topic. This mutually respectful relationship allowed the participants to provide authentic responses. However, it is possible that a researcher's bias remained. I acknowledge that I might bring my personal perspectives to this research, which was shaped by my previous teaching experiences in this setting. As much as possible through all of the above-mentioned

issues of trustworthiness, I tried to diligently follow the research process and report my findings accurately. Such consistency and accuracy may eliminate the possibility of invalidating the research as biased or contaminated by personal perspectives.

The second major limitation to the research was the lack of diversity in practitioners to participate in this study. I recruited teachers who taught in private early childhood settings. All of the participants were unmarried women who had not experienced motherhood. It was possible that participants of other genders or marital status not represented in these findings may have other perspectives and experiences. One of the participants overtly stated, “I don’t know exactly, however if I was a mom, I could empathize with the parents’ complaints better than I can now.” This left room for questions as to whether a teacher who had experience with motherhood might understand and act out empathy in different ways. However, the main purpose of the research was not to generalize the findings to other situations but, rather, to explore the perspectives of the particular participants involved in observations and interviews.

The third limitation to this research that I found was the absence of teacher-self-reflectivity in the process of data collection. The absence of teacher-self-reflectivity neglects the idea of praxis. Surely, this research was conducted for understanding and interpretation based on social constructivism. Nevertheless, Paulo Freire (1970) used a term to describe the unity between theory and practice: *praxis*. In fact, the two are not separate in educational settings. Rather, in his concept of theory and practice being as one is the process of taking action in practice whilst acting within a theoretical framework of thought. At the end of this research, all of the participants commonly acknowledged that this research provided them with an opportunity to look back over their teaching and better understand their own attitudes and behaviors concerning empathy. Teacher-self-reflectivity regarding teacher empathy in the classrooms

would build upon and enrich this research. Later, praxis in the research could be related to the participatory action research paradigm. It is an approach that seeks to understand the world by trying to change it with the participants as co-researcher (Reason & Bradbury, 2001).

One final limitation of this research to note is that I did not directly include the voices of young children, whose ideas might have confirmed some of the theories that arose throughout my observations. Of course the data represents teachers' perceptions of their relationships and I observed empathic exchange between teachers and children. However, a great deal of information from young children could conceivably been used to further triangulate or counter the teachers' awareness that they had empathic communication in interactions, teaching, and caring. All of the described limitations could be applied to conduct further study in the future. This is discussed in greater detail in the final chapter.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I have explained and justified how the qualitative, descriptive case study research approach chosen for the current research study was more appropriate than other research methods to accomplish the goals of the study and to explore how teachers perceived and expressed empathy in their work with young children. In this research study, I sought to understand how teachers' perceptions and understanding of teacher empathy related to their practices and to examine the resulting responses of the young children in their classrooms. The qualitative method was most appropriate to ascertain teacher perceptions and to collect examples of teacher experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Indeed, a case study research design used in the current research study appropriately described, analyzed, and interpreted participant understanding and acts of teacher empathy given lived experiences. By exploring the understanding and acts of preschool teachers, a greater understanding of teacher's perspectives

on empathy was established and perhaps in-depth understanding regarding teacher empathy were achieved.

Three preschool teachers who teach at Parangsae preschool placed in Goyang City, Gyeonggi province, South Korea were observed and interviewed in person. After obtaining informed consent and discussing confidentiality, the intention was that these three participants be observed and interviewed in order to collect data to answer the four research questions. Reliability and validity were addressed during the interviews by asking similar questions using different wording to ensure understanding, being clear and unambiguous in questioning, interviewing participants at a time and place that was most convenient so as to limit distractions or stress, using open-ended leading questions followed by more probing follow-up questions with participants. Classroom observations were also implemented resulting in triangulation this study. Multiple items of data were collected, then coded and analyzed by three ways including thematic, constant comparative, and first two cycles of analysis.

In Chapter 4, I report the results of this dissertation research study. Data collection procedures are discussed in further detail. In addition, the chapter provides the findings as they relate to the four research questions that guided the research study.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis, Interpretation, and Synthesis of Findings

The purpose of Chapter 4 is to present the results of the data analysis. The chapter is divided into the following parts: an introduction, data collection procedures, findings for each of the four research questions, and a summary section. The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive case study was to explore teacher understanding of empathy and its expression in their relationships and interactions with young children. This study was also conducted in order to learn about how three preschool teachers understood, acted and expressed empathy with their children. As a researcher, I believed that having increased knowledge of how teachers understood teacher empathy for the purposes of caring, teaching, and interacting with young children would shed light on how they internalized it, what biases or deficits they held about it, and why and how they were or were not effective in showing empathy toward young children.

In this study, I sought to learn about empathy through the voices of preschool teachers in South Korea. I also considered what factors might support or prevent empathy in teachers. Exploring how preschool teachers understand empathy and in what ways they express empathy through their relationships and interactions with young children may assist teacher educators and administrators in their task of providing appropriate supports for teachers. Furthermore, it could support experienced teachers in exploring and improving their understanding and efficacy in caring for children in the classroom.

In this chapter, I present the main findings obtained from nine in-depth interviews, a follow-up focus group interview, over 180 hours of classroom observations, and a collection of related teaching artifacts. The data collected from these resources revealed information to support five primary findings related to the conceptual framework of the study and the research

questions. The findings of this study add to the existing literature on the subject, calling upon the voices of teachers at the preschool level to examine how teacher empathy is perceived in the field of teaching and caring, and in what ways empathy is expressed by teachers through their interactions with young children from a more comprehensive perspective than previous studies. In this chapter, I present findings from data related to the specific research questions of the study, including:

1. How do preschool teachers understand the concept of empathy and its role in their relationships with young children?
2. In what ways do these teachers express empathy in their interactions with young children?
3. Is there a relationship that can be seen between early childhood teacher's understanding of empathy and their observed responses and interactions with children?
4. What factors do early childhood teachers perceive may have supported or diminished their empathic abilities in caring and teaching?

To answer the question of how teachers understood empathy and acted it out, I explored and interpreted the language and words they used, behaviors they described or were observed to have exhibited, and the values they represented. Teachers discussed how they understood (or tried to understand) and shared the emotions or experiences of children. The focus of this analysis was on what teachers understood and did to express empathy. Several themes captured their distinct behaviors and the nature of how teachers showed empathy and its perceived applications in their relationships with young children. The findings of this research reveal how teachers perceive their empathic relationships with their young children. The findings also reveal how teachers recognize the conditions and climates in which they work as well as the constraints

that they operate within, often seen as challenges to teachers' empathic concerns and interactions.

As described in Chapter 3, the data gathered from the teachers were analyzed in three ways in order to provide a picture of each teacher as a person and to compare the common themes that emerged from each classroom. Looking at the interviews and observations as a whole, I identified five major themes with several subthemes (see figure 4, next page). The first major theme, *meaning of empathy and its role*, addresses the first research question with data gathered from the interviews and observations. The second theme, *acts and expressions of teacher empathy*, address the second research question. The third, fourth, and final themes, *empathy in context*, and *discourse of empathy and factors stimulating or diminishing teacher empathy*, respectively, address the third and fourth research question. In this chapter, I discuss the findings Figure 4 according to each research questions. In addition, I describe the data and discuss the findings that emerged in greater detail.

Theme 1: Meaning of Empathy and Its Role

During the analysis of the interviews, unfamiliar and unconscious competence began to emerge from the all of participants' statements regarding teacher empathy. Three of the participants in this study commonly said that they did not really recognize what they did that specifically reflected empathic attitudes, behaviors, and expressions. However, as the interviews progressed, the described a variety of thoughts that they had and actions that they regularly performed that were related to teacher empathy.

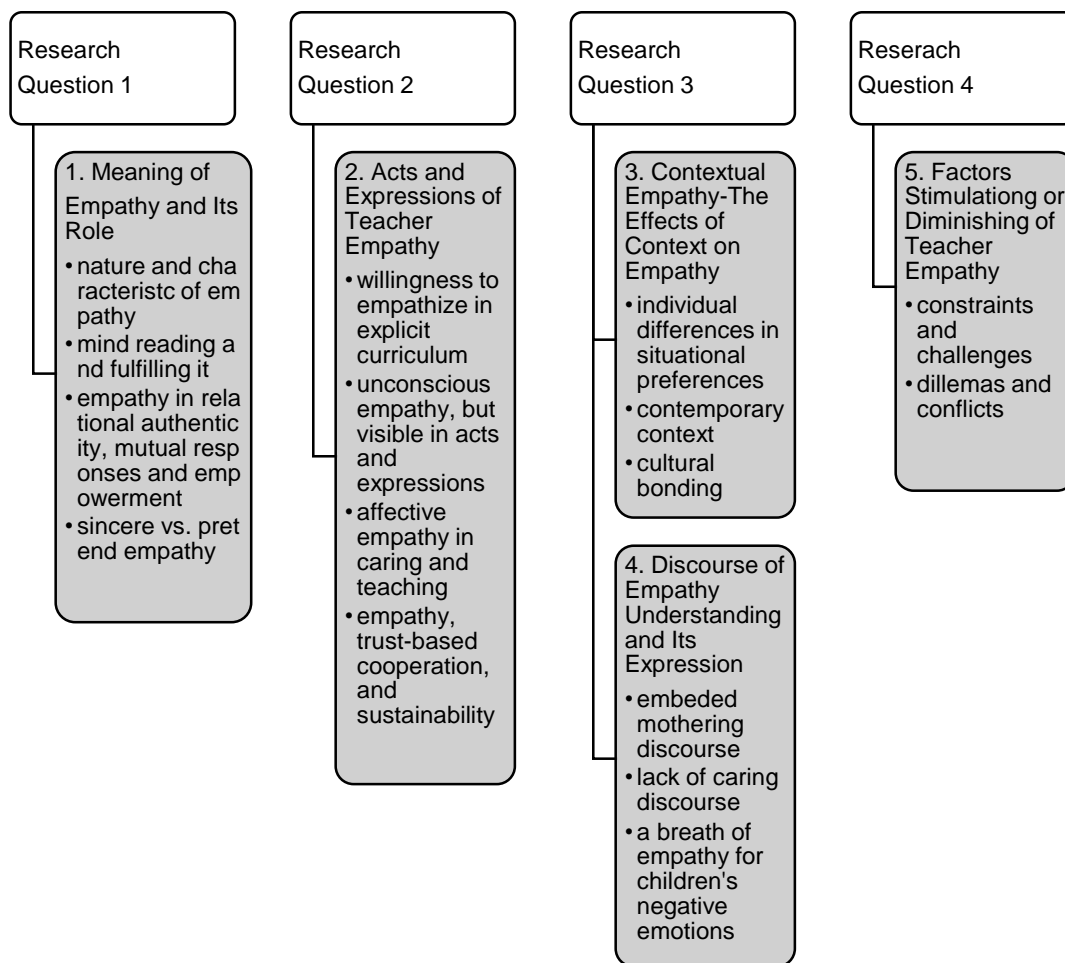


Figure 4. Thematic Findings

The first major theme identified addressed how preschool teachers perceived and understood empathy with young children in their relationships. This theme emerged through a careful examination and interpretation of the words and perspectives of teachers who were interviewed and various discussions regarding the nature and characteristics of empathy. This theme also includes three main subthemes, including:

- Fulfilling the mind, wishes, and desires;
- Empathy in relations and reciprocal empathy; and
- Sincere vs. pretend empathy.

Quotations from the participants' interviews are provided to give examples of critical statements and the meanings that they hold for teachers with young children.

Nature and characteristics of empathy. The first and key finding of this study supports its theoretical framework in that it indicates how the teachers understand and express their understanding of the nature and characteristics of teacher empathy in their relationships with young children. This finding relates to the following components of Cooper's (2004, 2011) empathy classification in the conceptual framework for this study: 1) fundamental empathy, 2) profound empathy, and 3) functional empathy. It explains that the powerful effects of empathy are not limited to relationships and behavior; empathy is also a fundamental component of high quality caring and teaching. The participants in this study believed that empathy should be considered as a central part of building strong relationships and putting "trust" in their relationships with young children. Fundamentally, the participants perceived that empathy was necessary for initiating relationships with children through both verbal and non-verbal interactions, including giving attention to children's feelings, closing the distance while interacting, listening carefully, cuddling, smiling, making eye contact, nodding and so on. The participants described the concept of empathy in their relations and interactions with young children in these ways:

First, with children, people emphasize that 'rapport' is important in meeting anyone and in building any relationship. For me, I guess rapport means empathy. I think rapport with young children could be built based upon empathy. At the beginning of the semester,

when a child was upset, I always attempted to understand a child's uncomfortable feelings and tried to figure out what caused a child be upset and help him or her. If I said, 'I don't understand why you're crying,' or, 'there is nothing to be upset about,' they might not trust me. So, to build and maintain trusting relationships with young children, empathy is important, especially in the beginning. Empathy helps us to be intimate with each other. (Moon)

Regarding empathic teachers, I think 'response' is significant! I mean, how I 'react' to children is very important as a means of empathizing their feelings and thoughts.

Sensitively and promptly responding to children is key when empathizing with young children. Whenever they're happy or they tell me something that happened to them, I always make eye contact and open my ears and mind to them in order to seriously listen to their voices and stories. (Lee)

The teachers defined and conceptualized that teacher empathy refers to the ability of the teacher to feel and understand what the child is feeling, communicate with them based on this understanding, and then respond in a positive way. The participants frequently used these words 'intimacy,' 'health connectedness,' 'trusting relationship,' 'similarity in feeling or understanding,' and 'responsive' throughout the interviews on the concept of empathy and its role in their relationships with young children. The teachers understood that teacher empathy was essential for making healthy connections and building strong relationships using an empathic attitude and mindset. In doing so, they recognized that they were responsible as gatekeepers for the developing children to successfully learn about and experience human relationships in their early years.

Over time, based on repeated fundamental empathy, the teachers sought to provide a

deeper understanding of children's concerns, demonstrate deep empathic concern, and model prosocial behaviors within the developing empathic atmosphere. To more profoundly empathize, empathic teachers said that they often drew on their own childhood experiences when considering children's feeling, thoughts, and needs. One teacher stated:

When I was a young child, my mom told me that I had a lot of difficulty separating from her. So, I can easily empathize with a child who experiences difficulties when coming into the classroom. You know I can give them the attention that they need. (Lee)

Another teacher echoed the same sentiment, stating:

I remembered an unpleasant memory from early childhood with my preschool teacher. When I talked to my teacher about a funny story, she didn't have any interest in what I was saying – she just paid attention to her own work. I was so sad that I will never forget that moment. So, I always try to keep an emotional closeness with my kids, after reflecting on my own previous experiences. (Kang)

These statements reflect that the participants believe empathic concern and a deeper understanding of their own memories and experiences ensure that it is easy for them to uncover the hidden factors that may cause a child to feel uncomfortable in the classroom.

With respect to profound empathy and its role, the teachers each recognized their role in not only the construction of an empathic classroom climate but also in modeling prosocial behaviors for young children. Teachers' deep understanding of both their own experiences as well as those of the children helped them to create an empathic atmosphere, allowing them to foster positive emotions and experiences through empathic interactions and open communication with one another. One teacher described this:

For children, there is always somebody who is open and accepting toward them at home.

However, when they come to school, they might be separated from these supporters, such as their mother, father, or grandparent. I want to stand by and walk along with them in the empathic atmosphere. So I always attempt to understand them deeply and also express how much I empathize with them. For example, I'll say 'I understand what you're thinking or feeling, I support your thoughts or feelings, or I believe in you! I hear your voice!' I express my empathy through my language and positive communication.

(Kang)

Another remarkable example of a teacher's modeling prosocial behavior for young children was observed in the classroom:

When a child who was absent for a long time due to a cold came back to the classroom, the teacher took some time with the entire class to ask about why the boy was absent for such a long time, how he was feeling now that he was back in the classroom, what he needs, and how other children might help him during the circle time. During this time, the teacher showed empathic concern by keeping eye contact and touching his hair affectionately. Children seemed to be sharing emotions and similar experiences. Then, other children were trying to mirror what the teacher was doing for the child. After the circle time, children moved toward him and hugged him while stating their concerns for him. Throughout this day, many of the children attempted to care for him including helping him to prepare lunch and carrying a chair for him. (Classroom observations for

Kang)

Both passages reflect that an attitude of empathic concern emerges through profound empathy. When a teacher shows profound empathy, it provides an empathic climate in which children can learn by sharing emotions and experiences and helping and caring for one other by emulating

their teacher's gestures, behaviors, and language.

Mind reading and fulfilling it. When it comes to the nature of empathy and its role, the participants' statements more overtly focused on reading and describing a child's mind and caring for them by fulfilling their needs to their satisfaction. All of the participants perceived the disposition of teacher empathy as encompassing reading children's minds, wishes, and desires by describing them in verbal and non-verbal ways. For example, when a child looked depressed, the teacher said, "You seem to be down this morning." The teachers constantly tried to read how the children felt through their facial expressions and unwonted distinct behaviors in order to read their mind. Additionally, the teachers showed inductive discipline, in which an adult helps the child notice others' feelings by pointing out the effects of the child's misbehavior on others, noting especially their distress and making clear that the child caused it (Berk, 2009, p. 485). During inductive discipline or management of a child's distracted behavior, all of the teachers first read the child's mind in an affirmative way prior to dealing with the behavior. The following example of reading a child's mind as a form of empathic understanding was seen in the following classroom observation:

Three children jumped up and ran through the classroom with shouts of victory during playtime. Other children yelled and complained, 'It's loud! Please be quiet. They make noise. Don't they?' Meanwhile, the teacher called the group together and said '*I totally understand you're very excited because you won the game (mind reading). If I were you guys, I would be so excited and I would want to shout out for joy like you guys did (empathizing). However, other students might want to read a book or focus on their own thoughts. In this case, how do you think they feel (inductive discipline)?*' The three children said, 'I can't hear myself think,' and, 'They might be angry.' (Classroom

observation for Moon)

In both of these examples, teachers were addressing the importance of being accepting and how the teachers were able to read the children's minds, not just judging their behaviors but rather understanding what was going on inside each child's head. The teachers asserted that inductive discipline based on empathy encourages empathic concern, which motivate prosocial behavior (Krevans & Gibbs, 1996).

On a similar note, teachers' statements also highlighted that empathic teachers should be responsible for fulfilling children's wishes, and desires. One teacher stated, "If a child is not cared for or empathized with, he or she might think no one is going to fill the void in his/her heart. If so, that child will have distrusting relationships with teachers." I interpreted these statements regarding the satisfaction of a child's needs or desires along with the attention they paid to the child's response. By reading the child's obvious indicators of satisfaction (e.g., gestures, facial expression) and proceeding to fulfill their desires, the teachers operated with both empathic understanding and sensitivity. One teacher also described her behavior and interactions as follows:

One child really wanted to sit by his favorite friend. Every day and every time, he wanted to sit by her side. I understand children have preferences and could express such preferences, even as friends. Sometimes it caused a conflict with peers and this girl was so stressed. So I decided to let them sit across from each other at the circle table.

Although he didn't sit by her, he was able to face her. I read his mind that he liked her and wanted see her face, then tried to satisfy his needs, even in alternative ways. (Lee)

Empathic teachers were ready to read exactly what a child's needs and desires were based upon their feelings and behaviors and then tried to understand in authentic ways, in turn leading to

satisfying them, typically with even better solutions than what the children had imagined.

Empathy in relational authenticity, mutual responses and empowerment. Overall, teachers' perspectives on the nature of empathy in interactions had commonalities in the ethics of reciprocity, referring to a situation or relationship between two people involving the mutual and cooperative interchange of respects or favors. In the same vein of reciprocity, the teachers spoke of the "empathizing cycle," a phenomenon involving one person, who is ready to accept and understand another's feelings and perspectives, while the other person also is also likely to show sincere emotion and deep understanding. In this way, both parties interact in the empathic communication process based on mutual respect. This finding relates to recent definitions of empathy as including an interactive component, as discussed in Chapter 1. In short, a teacher's ability to demonstrate interactive empathy may be seen in their attempts to identify with children, feel or guess their emotions or thoughts, and anticipate their behaviors with shared experiences or emotions. In accordance with this as a point of reference, the participants' statements often focused on empathy and its role in interactive relations with young children and even the parents. I interpreted this to indicate that empathy exists in any human relationship, including teacher-child and teacher-parent relationships. Thus, the teachers stressed that reciprocal empathy and mutual respect were important interactive components of all healthy relationships. The teachers also highlighted that profound empathy could be enriched by the interactive process of dictating who belongs in the classroom (i.e. teachers, children, or parents). The following passages include participants describing their perceptions and experiences regarding interactive empathy.

Balancing power with the parents. First of all, the teachers recognized interactive empathy as a prerequisite to successful partnerships with parents in the teacher-parent

relationship, resulting in an indirect impact on the developing children. When looking at interactive empathy, the finding unexpectedly emerged that teachers are often concerned about the imbalance between giving and receiving empathy as well as the discrepancy between expected responses caused by the unequal power dynamic inherent in their relationship. In particular, the private preschools relying on parental preferences and choices account for a large portion of early caring and education in South Korea. Meanwhile, the teachers have concerns about their school systems following the marketing logic. The teachers felt that because of market forces, they were placed at a lower position in the hierarchically. When describing the teacher-parent relationship, the teachers used phrases like, “like clients in marketing,” “inseparable shadows of children,” or “hierarchy or vertical relationship,” indicating their perception that teachers have the lower position in the relationship. Another example from teachers’ relational maps drawing indicated that teachers’ negative perceptions toward parents, by placing them more distant to them. Generally, with healthy relationships, teachers and parents are more likely to share power equally, giving and taking empathy reciprocally. Unfortunately, the participants of this study often perceived or experienced situations of power inequality between teachers and parents, in turn, leading to empathy gaps and an overall disparity in willingness to understand, accept, and relate one another’s perspectives and feeling with each other. The teachers stated:

Can a teacher be empathized with or cared for by someone? I have never expected empathy from parents. I’m always thinking about how to better and deeper empathize with children and their parents. I thought that empathic caring and teaching was solely my responsibility. Actually, if they spontaneously empathize with or care for me, I am thankful and I appreciate it. However, even when they don’t empathize with me, I don’t

ask them, 'Please empathize with me.' Nevertheless, as a human being, I would like to be empathized with and cared for by someone in the workplace. (Lee)

As I said before, I think that the teacher-parent relationship might be an 'UNEQUAL POWER' relationship. There is nothing to give and nothing to receive in terms of an empathic response with the parent who thinks, 'I'm the dominant position in this relationship.' I feel like some parents are more difficult to empathize with. When they complain, some parents say, 'I know you're professional, but you haven't given birth to a baby yet, or had a baby.'...I guess they have no idea how much what they said just hurt my feelings. When this happens, I feel like my feelings, my values, and my job are ignored. (Kang)

The teachers' statements indicate that equal power relationships with parents might enable more mutual respect, and thus increased reciprocal empathy with a balance between giving and receiving empathy. A successful partnership between teachers and parents is likely to be constructed based on the premise that the teacher understands and shares the parent's emotions and perspectives and that both parties respect each other in mutual ways without any sort of power dynamics. By achieving a successful partnership based on reciprocal empathy, teachers and parents can sincerely or profoundly communicate and cooperate with one another for the sake of their children.

Equal power with the children. Similarly, the teachers perceived teacher-child relationships as potentially interactive empathic processes. Interactive empathy was noted to be a significant contributor for the development of positive teacher-child relationships as a means of fostering intimacy and connectedness between the two parties. One teacher described this:

Relationships with young children are also similar to other relationships which I've

experienced. Throughout my work, if I have a great relationship with my kids, I'm really happy to teach them and care for them. For me, children are like another colleague in the workplace. I usually share equal power with children for making decisions and attempt to show mutual respect for their opinions. We live together in the classroom like family members. (Moon)

Another example of a teacher who discussed the interactive components of the nature of empathy stated:

There is something to the interchange with one other within the equal power relationship in the classroom. All situations contain bidirectional interaction and happen reciprocally. I also have a child who is difficult. If I don't treat this child carefully, my prejudice might be exposed by my facial expressions, gestures, or the tone of my voice. Children surprisingly capture such signs regardless of my intentions. (Kang)

Based upon these statements, the participants revealed that teachers believe they need to share equal power with children and carefully pay attention to or be responsible for unintended un-empathic behaviors, attitudes. The reason is that children are likely to recognize these signs as positive or negative during the interactive empathy interchange, resulting in either building healthy relationships or stagnating them. Thus, the teachers underlined their perceptions of empathy in that they used empathy as to make children feel mutually respected through stressing interaction within equal power relationships.

Linkage between the peers. Additionally, empathy consists of understanding feelings that belong to others, sometimes encompassing more than two people at the same time. The participants perceived themselves as acting as a 'bridge' between children's peer groups, especially when conflict occurred. One teacher stated:

When I resolve conflicts between children, I hold their hands on both sides. Then I feel like I am a bridge between them...an emotional bridge through physical contact. I also never pay attention to just one; rather, I consider both of their needs. Within the interactive empathy interchanges, the three of us try to seek better decisions that will fairly satisfy all. No sacrifices for either of them.

This finding reveals the concept that teachers may provide children the opportunity to experience situations of equal power in any human relationship, as a part of their moral development. As I mentioned, unequal power dynamics in any human relationship can lead to an empathy imbalance or gap. Hence, teachers' perspectives on interactive empathy illustrate that the teachers play a crucial role in either nurturing or limiting a child's empathic capacity. The participants highlight that it is crucial for all teachers to consider all children's needs and work to make decisions that will offer an equal level of support and a certain degree of empathy for them at the same time.

Sincere vs. pretend empathy. In empathic relations with young children, this finding explores how often the participants feel guilty about showing pretend empathy and masking serious situations, the opposite of what we would consider to be an understanding of empathy. Pretend empathy was not seen in my observations, or at least not identified; however, the participants frequently discussed the concept in interviews or frank discussions about times that they showed superficial empathy toward their children. One teacher asked me, "Didn't you see that I exhibited 'pretended empathy'? Today, I masked my emotions on my face twice. It's my fault, you know. I have to reflect on my mistakes." Although the teachers had clear perspectives and an understanding of how to show sincere empathy as an educational philosophy, they were not likely to enact this in practice, instead showing pretend or inauthentic empathy.

Sincere empathy in the teachers' statements refers to times in which I interpreted the teachers' intent to understand and accept a child's perspectives, feelings, and behaviors without making assumptions, as well as their ability to respond authentically to the child and meet their needs with affirmative expression. One teacher said:

I think sincere empathy is an important part of empathy. When I was a new teacher, I just thought I had to provide the same educational opportunities for all children, not considering individual children's needs or feelings. I thought that was fair. In the past, my children and I would prepare for a role playing exercise after reading a children's book and the children would make animal masks. However, one of them was an introverted child and didn't want to be an actor in front of the whole classroom. Later, her mom let me know that she cried, saying, 'I don't want to make an animal mask for play and I'm afraid of acting.' At that time, I figured out that I was not providing sincere empathy. I was acting based on my overwhelming desire to provide the same experiences for all of the children. However, I didn't understand her real mind and capture it. No teacher's assumptions! No teacher's biases! No teacher's own desires! Just listen to what the children say! It is important for children to express what is actually on their mind. (Kang)

Kang's understanding of sincere empathy is accordance with part of the theoretical framework for this study, teaching as caring, explained in Chapter 2. In that section, as caring is described, morality associates with empathy in an understanding of others; a teacher must replace his or her own needs and desires with the needs and desires of the children in the classroom. Thus, I interpreted her statement to mean that a genuine caring relationship depends upon a teacher's ability to identify, understand, and meet children's needs and desires and consider children's

point of view.

Despite having sincere empathy as a foundational educational perspective, some of the teachers appealed that they were not able to express empathy in authentic ways. Rather, the participants recognized that it was possible for them to exercise pretend empathy due to the various constraints present in classroom situations including a teacher's failure to emotionally self-regulate, lack of self-care, un-empathic situations, class size, lack of time, limited individual interaction, and so on. The teachers described these:

Today in the morning, soon after I arrived at my workplace, I received a phone call from a parent with many complaints. The mom who called started to complain about the school bus, lunch time, and the overall school, issues that are not even related to me. After that, in the classroom, I was likely to show pretend empathy for the children. Because I'm a human being...I'm also a human being. If the mom's kid ran into me, I might picture her face on the child's for a moment, of course just in the spur of the moment. I just said 'hello' and hugged the child, however it was "SOULLESS". It was unreasonable, so I was sorry for doing that to my kid. (Kang)

There were children who were difficult to empathize with. For example, one child continuously told on her friend to me while another child continuously showed aggressive behavior toward his friends. I know, I know, I know. I understand sometimes these kids wanted to get some attention from me. A child starved for attention throws a temper tantrum. I hope to give more time and solo attention to these children. Given that there was limited time, sometimes I just said 'I know what's up with you'. I mean just the 'WORDS JUST CAME OUT OF MY MOUTH.' Despite the importance of sincere empathy, I couldn't consider why these children behaved like that. (Moon)

The teachers used the words ‘soulless,’ ‘words without sincerity,’ and ‘superficial’ in relation to descriptions of sincere empathy and pretended empathy. The participants showed remarkable similarities when considering pretend empathy which they explicitly connected to barriers to building strong, trusting relationships with young children. I interpreted this to indicate that the teachers do, in fact, desire to empathize with children sincerely and they generally do recognize its role in the construction of a stable, trusting relationship. Such sincere empathy ensures a secure psychological attachment with greater emotional closeness resulting in a productive atmosphere for young children to develop and learn.

Theme 2: Acts and Expressions of Teacher Empathy

The first research question addressed how the teachers understood empathy in their experience of caring and teaching. With the second research question, I sought to understand in what ways the teachers acted and expressed empathy and how it affected their relationships and interactions with young children. The second theme that emerged – acts and expression of empathy – specifically addresses the second research question and captures the unique behaviors and dispositions of how teachers show empathy toward young children as both conscious and unconscious acts. Parts of observed empathic responses were triangulated with what types of characteristics of empathy teachers spoke about in the interviews. In this study, empathy was also observed in a variety of ways, each able to be categorized with a thread of connections through Cooper’s empathy classification (2004, 2011). These categories are interrelated and compounding, meaning that more than one type of empathy typically happened at the same time. Teacher empathy was observed in various ways including language, gestures, facial expression, and so on, and was seen as both intentional and unintentional.

In the following discussion I describe this theme of acts and expressions of empathy and

provide examples of how I interpreted the observation field notes, the statements regarding acting out and expressing empathy toward young children. This theme discussed in the following section focuses on the participants' perceptions of their experiences and expressions of empathy in caring and teaching. This finding illustrates the participants' acts of teacher empathy as a reflection of the context of their current understanding and given meanings. A sense of interrelatedness or overlap between the subthemes emerged from the classroom observations and the related interviews. The understanding, perspectives, and children's responses to the teachers' behaviors, expressions of empathy, and the teachers' awareness of their own acts of empathy were interlinked in this theme.

Four subthemes emerged under this theme in response to the second research question regarding the teachers' acts and expression of empathy, including:

- *Willingness to empathize with the explicit curriculum* which details how the teachers planned a curriculum including empathizing with the children and how the teachers provided sufficient spaces for children to empathize with each other;
- *Empathy that is unconscious, but visible in acts* which relates to how the teachers showed their own empathy without any specific intent or desire to show empathy;
- *Affective empathy in caring and teaching* which refers to the importance of the united nature of affection and cognition in empathic teaching and caring; and
- *Empathy, cooperation, and sustainability* which examines teachers' awareness of their empathic inferences and ability to understand empathy playing out in their teaching practice such as helping children to cooperate with each other in a competitive atmosphere and facilitating sustainable development for young

children.

I discuss each of these themes in greater detail below.

Willingness to empathize in explicit curriculum. The first subtheme represents how teachers specifically intend to display their empathic understanding and act out empathy in their caring and teaching. While the teachers planned and managed curricula for young children, they considered the children's ages and level of capacity to empathize. The participants' statements show that the teachers' expectations of individual children's ability to empathize were dependent on the children's ages. When I asked the teachers in the interviews, "What do you think about your children's ability to empathize? Do you consider it in your teaching practice?" each teacher responded that being empathic depends on the children's age, thus they facilitated appropriate approaches through explicit curricula concerning teacher empathy and differentiated reactions to empathize children at different ages. The participants described their experiences in these ways:

It's very difficult for children to empathize with each other. It is also difficult for them to grasp and regulate their own emotions, in particular in situations with sharing toys. Some of them often learn by imitating, however I guess it's not sincere empathy. They have a lack of experience in empathizing with another because it's their first time at school.

(Lee)

I expect for children to grow in their ability to empathize by 50%. However, they're still in egocentric mode so I encourage them to imagine other's perspectives. (Kang)

It's not perfectly 100%, but it's good as far as it goes. If I said that children already experienced something similar to their own experiences, most of them found this easy to understand. They remembered similar experiences and memories and then empathized

with the peer's feelings and behaviors. However, there are individual differences in ability to empathize, especially a child who is difficult to empathize with. (Moon)

I interpreted these statements to mean that the level of a child's ability to empathize is a key point for the teachers to consider when setting reasonable expectations for the child, helping them to emulate teachers' behaviors or attitudes, and building relationships through getting to know children more intimately.

Teachers' understanding and actions concerning the degree of children's ability to empathize were captured explicitly during planning and management of the curriculum. The teachers tended to show empathy through the types of play, activities, lesson plans or content, and materials that eventually enabled children to reach out, developing positive emotions and experiences. In classroom observations and while examining teaching artifacts, it was also revealed that the teachers explicitly organized their lessons further by providing useful tools and resources in order to support children in access to and engagement with the classroom content. These teachers' explicit curricula concerning empathy were observed in various aspects of their practices. First of all, the teachers facilitated different types of unstructured play, including water-sand play and clay-dough play with the intention of encouraging the children to be relaxed, resulting in a sufficient mind-spaces within which they could empathize with one another. During the classroom observations, both teachers and children seemed to be happy, having fun while playing together. Meanwhile, they were also observed recalling specific events that they had already experienced and sharing positive experiences and feelings, usually while engaging in everyday conversation related to the children's lives. The empathy these teachers showed revealed that this type of time and opportunity to talk gives both parties the opportunity to engage in individual communication, resulting in a deeper understanding based on the building

of an emotionally secure and safe relationship.

Second, empathic teachers planned various activities with the aim of communicating and understanding children's feelings and experiences and model morality including conversations at circle time, children's self-evaluations of play, art appreciation activities, and so on. For example, every Monday morning, the teachers had conversations with the whole class about how they spent the weekend. At that time, the teachers modeled having interests in others and sincerely paying attention to them wherein children experienced the sharing of others' feelings and experiences and empathizing with them. Another effective tool that many of the teachers used was the 'self-assessment sheets with smiley faces' after play time. As children the various face expression and descriptions that they felt appropriately represented their feelings. With respect to this, one teachers stated:

Even though it is not a large part of effective communication, I think that the children's self-assessment sheets with smiley faces become another 'window of communication' between the teachers and children. Symbols or signs are easier ways for children to express their feelings so that I am able to understand children's emotions that I might have missed through this method. (Moon)

The teachers also showed a remarkable example of including empathy within the curriculum when they explicitly connected art appreciation activities to providing opportunities for understanding others' feeling and perspectives. In addition to empathizing with characters from a children's fairy tale, the teachers overtly used classic works of art to inspire young children to observe closely, empathize with the object, and discuss respectfully. Young children learned how to observe the object's facial expressions and translate their thoughts related to shown emotional signals into language and listen and respond to multiple perspectives. A teacher

facilitated the examination of a masterpiece of Korean traditional art as an opportunity for modeling empathy in this way (see below Figure 5):



Figure 5. Exploring Empathy through Art: A masterpiece of Hongdo Kim, a famous Korean artist in the 18th century, Seodang, and village school [schoolhouse].

Retrieved from <https://ko.wikipedia.org/wiki/%EA%B9%80%ED%99%8D%EB%8F%84>.

As can be seen this picture, one of the students is crying. The teacher asked, ‘What can be seen?’ The children predicted and answered, ‘A boy is crying. [The others are] holding back their laughter.’ Then, the teacher followed up by asking, ‘How does he look? Could you guess why the boy might be crying?’ The children responded, ‘He looks very sad. I guess his peers are kidding with him.’ One child noted, ‘The last time I also cried as my friend made me was upset, I remember.’ While another stated, ‘I have different idea he might break his artwork up.’ The teacher and the children shared different perspectives based upon the observed clues. In the meantime, the teacher provided the opportunity for the children to empathize with others’ feelings and became

a model of careful listening and respectful discussion for young children. (Classroom observation for Kang)

To further emphasize the importance of planning and managing curriculum contents concerning building empathic classroom climates, a teacher spoke about her teaching experiences, stating:

At the beginning of the semester, I planned a lesson theme, *My Mind*, with the purpose of helping children to perceive their own emotions, understand that their friends have their own emotions, and to learn to express such emotions in their language and facial expression. I also hoped to teach them about converting and redirecting the anger they feel towards doing something positive, instead of suppressing their emotions. We discussed this together and my kids suggested that listening to music, painting, running, and having time for meditation were good ways for them to calm themselves down.

(Kang)

This passage shows that the teachers considered lesson plans for improving children's empathic abilities as well as modeling empathy. This finding also includes the concept that teachers' intentions to foster empathic classroom climates are likely to occur in interactive relationships and through equity of status with young children, wherein children tend to feel a desire to be respected by and empathized with by the teachers.

Finally, one of the empathic approaches, a video revisit, was more overt in some statements expressed by the teachers. With respect to fostering empathic climates in the classroom, a teacher talked about using a 'video revisit strategy,' which she learned through the training for in-service teachers, to help easily remind children of what happened to them in the past. The

teacher said:

Not all children are able to see peers' conflicts or situations in which they need to follow the rules. So I record what is happening in their lives, then I show the video to them, sharing ideas related to situations which need to be empathized with prior to making better decisions. (Kang)

This teacher's experience using particular materials for empathy represents teachers' concerns and attempts to understand children's cognitive development as it relates to empathic abilities within an explicit curriculum.

Unconscious empathy, but visible in acts and expressions. The subtheme of unconscious empathy refers to the idea that teacher empathy is able to exist in the hidden curriculum and implicit ways without any explicit intentions. This finding corresponds to Noddings (2003) and Cooper's (2004, 2011) arguments that time is necessary for sincere empathy and genuine caring relationships to be cultivated, not only through the taught curriculum but through the normal conversations and interactions which take place between people. In contrast to a willingness to empathize with young children and model empathy, the participants' expressions and acts of teacher empathy in their classroom seemed to be relatively unconscious or unintentional. Despite the unconscious nature of these acts, such expressions of empathy are also related to the components of empathy: emotional, behavioral, and cognition, which supports previous literature reviews. Although the teachers did not intend to empathize with the young children, their empathic attitudes and understanding showed *naturally* in these ways: sensitive responses to children's needs, flexible management of the schedule, mindfulness, emotional coaching, empathic communication, and open inferences.

First, in terms of teachers' expressions and acts of empathy, sensitivity and flexibility

relate to a certain depth of empathy, which is asserted by Cooper's (2004, 2011) empathy classification. The participants seemed to utilize their five senses to meet and satisfy the children's needs, showing and relating to the teachers' understanding of empathy as a fulfillment of children's desires. Empathic interactions in stable teacher-child relationships were vital to providing such sensitive environments for the developing child. Also, the teachers' considerations regarding flexible schedules and lesson planning considering children's interests were juxtaposed with the teacher's sensitivity as empathic behaviors and attitudes. In addition to teacher's sensitivity and flexibility, the teachers' statements regarding the importance of mindfulness refer to self-regulation of attention and accepting current situations. The participants were also observed to self-regulate their emotions before disciplining children, thus modeling mindfulness for young children with whom they may have difficulty empathizing. In response, young children mirrored and emulated their teacher's behaviors when they were upset. Teachers highlight that mindfulness improves empathy. A teacher who believes that mindfulness improves self-compassion, calmness, and empathy, stated:

After outside play, a child came into the classroom and started to cry due to missing his coat on the hanger. An assistant teacher looked around the classroom to find his coat with him. He showed his temper and got irritated, refusing to confirm whether or not the coats she found belonged to him. He simply said, "None of those are mine." In circle time, the classroom teacher, who waited and watched his behaviors said, 'I know and totally understand you are upset about missing your coat. However, you're behaving in a fussy manner to another. Please be relaxed and clam down. After finishing this circle time with whole of class, could I help you find your coat if you don't mind?' (With a soft and gentle voice)... During play time, the classroom teacher looked around each of the

clothes that were hanging on the hangers while holding his hand. Finally, they found his coat and he was relieved as he realized his mistake—he thought it was not his coat but it was. Then he went to the assistant teacher to apologize for his manners. (Moon)

Empathic teachers model and encourage mindfulness while affording a mind-space in which one may empathize with others. While the teachers' expressions of empathy were observed through mindfulness, they showed emotional coaching with young children; which means that the teachers sought to encourage the children by recognize their own feelings, accept them, and then express them to one other in positive ways within conflict situations with peers.

Second, participating teachers used many different ways to communicate with young children. The teachers' statements focused on empathic communication that empathic teachers frequently engaged in daily talk, hallway talk, and informal conversations. One teacher said, "When student-teachers came into my class, I always suggest that they have everyday dialogue with my kids because it's a better way to build rapport and familiarity with them." Additionally, the participants preferred to take positive and affirmative approaches such as encouragement, praise, positive language, and I-messages. The participants often said phrases like, "I believe you can do it! Don't worry about any problem that happened to you before. Cheer up! We are supporting you," and "Good job! Wonderful!" to encourage children to overcome challenges and compliment their courage. As the teachers communicated in empathic ways, most of children showed confidence with smiles. The following example shows teachers recognizing positive language and I-message strategies as attributors to express how much the teachers empathize with young children using warmth and openness. One teachers' empathic behaviors were observed:

During sing-a-song at circle time, the boys loudly sing a song by yelling. Other peers

beside them cover their ears with their hands. However, the teacher waits until after sing-a-song, giving them time to spontaneously stop this distracting behavior. The teacher said, 'I'm sorry all of you couldn't enjoy singing a song. Some of you made noise during sing-a-song.' One of the children responded 'I hope to sing again without any noise or screaming.' Another chimed in, 'Right! I want to do that!' The teacher made eye contact with the boys and adamantly said, 'Please keep your friends' desires in mind. I also believe you guys might enjoy singing this song with your peers.'

(Classroom observation for Moon)

The teacher's behavior represents using positive language and I-messages to express their visible empathy toward young children, even controlling their distracted behaviors. The finding reveals that empathy-building messages increase affective indicators of empathy, resulting in better communication through empathy.

Third, the teachers' acts of empathy included the consideration of open inferences and being accepting of children's perspectives rather than making assumptions, inferences, or judgments. The teachers' statements reflect that empathic teachers usually pay attention to more than just challenging children's behaviors; rather, they consider the factors that might cause these negative behaviors and emotions. One teacher stated:

I try to comprehend children's intentions, or the center of their minds through observations of their behaviors or facial expressions in holistic ways that consider not just a part of the child, but rather the child as a whole. If a child shows aggressive behavior toward another, they should be taught from a young age that fighting or hitting is not acceptable behavior, however, I would guess that the child might also have a reasonable cause behind their aggression. So, I attempt to listen their thoughts on such

behaviors and why they behaved like that. As a show of profound empathy, I try to understand their behaviors by considering the various contexts that may influence them. Despite the importance of an objective viewpoint, often I couldn't completely hide my feelings about a child's aggressive behaviors. I might show this through my angry facial expression or eyes. Honestly, I often judge based on my previous experiences and biases about such children, and just react without sincere empathy. (Kang)

The teachers highlighted deeply digging into a child's world by opening up toward the child and accepting their feelings and thoughts as part of empathy. Unfortunately, it was also found that teachers' willingness to empathize without any judgments, references, or interpretations were often disturbed by constraints, which is a detail discussed and described further in the fifth theme, below.

Affective empathy in caring and teaching. The subtheme of affective empathy in caring and teaching refers to the importance of the united nature of affection and cognition in teaching and caring. This third subtheme of this study supports its theoretical framework in that it illustrates how Cooper (2004), Noddings (2003), and Vygotsky (1980, 1986) encompass affection as well as cognition in understanding caring and teaching that is related to the expression of teacher empathy. In part of the theoretical framework, the role of stable human relationships in caring and teaching are stressed and the separation of affection and cognition is highlighted as a key challenge to many children's learning and development. The participants' statements that more obviously focused on affective empathy in caring and teaching indicated in what ways teachers showed and perceived these aspects as advantages or strengthening points in empathic caring and teaching.

First, the teachers revealed that *knowing* the child was the first step toward making

empathic acts and expressions. One teacher stated:

It might be easy for the teachers to understand children's behaviors and accurately pinpoint particular causes for such behaviors, if the teachers know about important milestones in child development at different ages. Also, I never ignore any trivial thing, but rather attempt to pay attention with affection to a child's tiny bits of life. I think that is a part of the constant exertion required to really 'know' children and empathize with them. (Moon)

I interpreted her statement to mean that through 'knowing' children and empathizing with them about various development stages and milestones and personal life issues, non-judgment and anti-biased teaching arise, both a part of profound empathy.

The following example represents teachers' control levels in regards to the difficulty of tasks and content for young children with affection in learning and teaching. Such teachers' attempts to control the level of difficulty of tasks are representative of teacher empathy, especially profound empathy, by Cooper's (2004, 2011) empathy classification. One teacher stated:

The younger children are, the more important it is to increase the gap between individuals' ability to complete their tasks. Some of them might be done with every task I give them, while others might have difficulty simply completing one. So I always observe closely and encourage them to not hesitate to request if my help or support to reach the finals, you know it's *the zone of proximal development*. Sometimes I prepare several different levels of tasks for each child at different developmental stages, abilities, and needs. I believe such attention to children and empathic teaching help to cultivate children's learning and development. (Kang)

This teacher's perception of affection in caring and learning suggests that the teachers are responsible for observing children's behaviors and emotions and then grasping children's cues in order to afford appropriate supports to satisfy each of them in empathic caring and teaching.

Another example is that displaying children's artwork in the classroom is part of showing teacher empathy. One classroom teacher was observed and described a situation in which children drew their own portraits. The next day, the teacher immediately prepared name tags for play using the children's artwork. When they came into the classroom, they smiled, were excited, shared positive emotions with their peers, and seemed to have self-esteem and a sense of self-worth in their works. The teacher's experience highlights that it provides an opportunity to share positive emotions and experiences and to respect the work of others, resulting in cultivating empathy and a strong sense of classroom community and its climate.

Empathy, trust-based cooperation, and sustainability. The teachers perceived empathy as a major contributing factor to develop sustainability in early childhood caring and education. Empathy facilitates more successful sustainable growth through communication, cooperation, and involvement. Their statements emphasize harmony, interdependence, cooperation and respect for both humans and nature as well as within human relationships. The subtheme of empathy, cooperation, and sustainability refers to the idea that teacher empathy is acted out through a variety of empathic experiences for developing children in order to expand the boundaries of the groups with which one should empathize, beyond the class, the school, and human being. In other words, the teachers highlighted that the ranges or boundaries of children's empathy are able to be nurtured by teacher's empathy through curricula, activities, and acts in these ways: embracing/inclusion of other groups as a part of projects, continuity of positive experiences through the provision of preschool family events, caring for animals or plants, and

the particular Forests Experience and Activity Program. By providing such activities, the children were able to engage in empathic experiences with various environments and form wider relationships.

Embracing other groups. To begin with, the teachers' emphasis on caring for younger children and cooperating with elders to extend the relationships wherein children adjust to the new surroundings demonstrated empathy. One teacher said:

You know in these days many children don't have any siblings in their family. They're just the one baby in there. So they don't have enough experience with sharing things with siblings and understanding other's feelings or thoughts. Preschool is responsible for the provision of another type of sibling with whom one may empathize. (Kang)

Another teacher echoed the same sentiment, stating:

We don't officially have any multi-age or mixed age group classes in the school, however at the final stage of a project we often invite different age groups into our classroom, which strengthens that class. (Lee)

Teachers were highly articulate about their beliefs and practices related to empathy, many of which I was able to confirm through observation. As one teacher described:

When all of the 3-year-old classrooms were invited to the history museum of the *Three Kingdom's period of Korea* which was put together by preschoolers and 5-year-old children, some of them became curators to explain what they made and what they learned. Others read books and played with the younger children. Meanwhile, children were caring and treating their little sisters and brothers in positive ways. Children showed empathic attitudes, behaviors and emulated their teacher's behaviors that I modeled empathy including eye contact, close distance, positive language and tone of

voice. (Moon)

This statement reflects that the teachers consider themselves to play a crucial role in extending and widening children's relationships, resulting in experiencing wider relationships with another type of sibling wherein young children cultivate profound empathy incorporating a deep understanding of their own self and others.

Continuity of positive experiences and feeling. Next, the extension of empathy through the cooperation with the families emerged as another way of attempting to develop wider relationships wherein children continue to have positive experiences and feelings. The teachers' statements focused on extending empathy through a continuity of positive experiences and emotions between the school and home. The preschool in this study has an annual family event, named the '*One-Mind, One-Family*' festival. In my observation, all of the children seemed to enjoy making invitation cards and sending them to their families. When children recalled joyful memories through video revisiting, they constantly shared special feelings and experiences with others at circle time and expressed their own feelings through drawing pictures and creating artifacts during play time. As one teacher described, "Some of the parents cooperated to prepare this festival and my kids also took responsibility to make it happen." Through cooperation with the families and family involvement, a continuity of positive experiences contributed to the young children being able to extend profound empathy within wider relationships between the school and family.

Empathy for sustainable development. Finally, caring for the environment requires empathic understanding toward people and nature. The teachers' empathic understanding and practices encompass the environment and nature, beyond human beings. In other words, the participants' statements represent the embedment of the concept of sustainability into the

understanding and expression of empathy. For instance, the teachers provided a center of caring for pets such as rabbits, snails, ornamental fish and plants in the classroom. A teacher illustrated:

In the morning, my kids checked on their jar of guppies, watered their little flower garden, and fed rabbits. They may not exactly know the word, 'empathy', but they were practicing empathy. I believe that teachers can help children to cultivate and strengthen their empathic abilities. Like watering plants, I'm also watering 'experiences to empathize' for children. (Moon)

Additionally, the participants were proud of the values of The Forests Experience Program that is a periodical activity that children experience interactions and communication with living nature in the forest. Through these experiences, the teachers supported young children in the development of a respectful recognition of living within wider relationships:

One child continually gave water to and fed the rabbits, "Why don't you drink it? I want to give it to you," he said. A classroom teacher came to him and said, "Hey, she might be not thirsty. Would you like to drink water? Are you thirsty now?" The child responded, "No, I don't want a drink, but later I might be thirsty." The teacher smiled and stroked his head, "Right! Just like you, the rabbit also can feel thirsty or not." (Classroom Observation for Lee)

One girl yelled, "No, don't do that to the ants! You'll step on them." Two boys poked a sand heap with a stick. "Why not! It's funny!" they said. A classroom teacher come to them and said, "Hey guys, how would you feel if another person poked you in the ribs?" Both of them said, "I would be so upset! Then I would also cry." The teacher responded, "Of course, it's not funny. Even though the ants are such a little life, they also feel pain, pleasure, and so on." The next day, when a pine caterpillar fall down from a tree, one of

the boys caught it in his hands and set it down on a leaf, whispering, “Don’t be hurt, don’t get sick.” (Classroom observation for Kang)

The findings of this subtheme, empathy, cooperation, and sustainability, reveal the teachers’ perceptions of their strengths in empathic acts and how they planned to address those. From the participants’ statements and observations, I interpreted the meaning to be that teacher empathy is not restricted to the close relationships that they form with young children, but rather it needs to be understood within the context that every human being is connected with other beings in a huge chain. When young children care for living things from siblings to animals, plants or environments, they increase their ability to empathize with, care for, and respect an extended group of beings, thus emulating teacher empathy within wider relationships. Thus, teachers play a substantial role in the provision of extended and wider relationships for developing children.

Theme 3: Contextual Empathy-The Effects of Context on Empathy

The third theme that emerged directly addresses the third research question; it considers the relationships between teacher understanding on empathy and its expression. The teachers overtly represented that an act of empathy tends to be a situational cognitive process as the context has an impact on how the empathy is expressed. This third theme emerged the statements and views of the participants that suggested that context serves as a critical influence on the occurrences, types, characteristics, or degree of empathy expression that are perceived and displayed by preschool teachers. The teachers’ statements highlight that not all of the teachers’ understandings of empathy or acts of empathy may be characterized in a uniform or monolithic manner; rather, teacher’s expressions of empathy are likely to differ depending on the situation or circumstances.

The three subthemes that emerged under this theme include:

- Individual differences in situational preferences;
- Contemporary context; and
- Cultural bonding.

In the following discussion, I provide quotations from the interviews to give examples of significant statements and the meanings that they held in regard to relations between teacher's understanding and expressions of empathy.

Individual differences in situational preferences. The first subtheme represents the variety of ways that teacher empathy may be conceptualized and expressed in teaching experiences. In terms of the types or characteristics of teacher empathy, the teachers described that empathy expression partly depends on each teacher's individual preferences as constructed and personally defined by personality, reflected life experiences, and interpersonal empathic relationships. Based upon internalized perspectives, the participants' statements reveal distinct strengths and preferences of empathy expression in their interactions and relationships with young children.

For example, in terms of physical contact, which is one type of empathic expression, each teacher indicated different perspectives and preferences. Lee believed in the importance of making a positive impression by smiling as a means of showing her empathic attitude; her behaviors reflected positive perspectives on physical contact as being a major contributor to the expression of deeper empathy. Moon believed that physical contact was necessary for building a stable rapport with young children, but also pointed out that physical contact does not encompass all of empathy. In contrast to both of them, Kang expressed the view that empathy ought to be shown by taking a positive and affirmative approach to communication rather than through

physical contact. To be specific, two teachers described their formative experiences in these ways:

I guess the teacher's personality is a contributor to expressing empathy in different ways. Throughout my life experience, I have seen that some teachers tend to let out their feelings, while others often speak bluntly and show rugged kindness. Despite having a willingness to empathize, this does not depend upon the particular quality of the teacher—it's just that people have differences in their ways of expression. Some teachers are used to having empathic communication with young children by using positive language and tone of voice, while others prefer physical contact including hugging, kissing, and stroking a child's head, which I prefer. Every teacher is able to empathize in different ways following their own beliefs, perspectives, and preferences. (Lee)

I guess there is a directional correlation between physical contact and the degree of profound empathy. Physical contact is important and it has its own meaning in that it is a show of intimacy and connectedness with someone else. The intimacy and inter-connectedness allows for more opportunities for people to empathize with someone else's feeling or experiences by imagining what it would be like to be in their situation. (Moon)

Each of their perspectives on the characteristics and expression of empathy were reflected in their behaviors I was able to observe in their classrooms. I interpreted this to mean that teacher empathy is understood and expressed by individual experiences and preferences, which might be shaped by personality and empathic experiences in relationships and lives. With a further emphasis on individual differences in understanding and expression of teacher empathy, all of the participants reported there was not any correct answer, but that the degree to which someone

prefers this type of empathy expression is solely derived from their previous experiences in interpersonal relationships.

Contemporary context. The second subtheme identified as the contemporary context of teaching as emotional work was frequently mentioned throughout the interviews about teachers' understanding and practices of empathy. This finding relates to a component of the conceptual framework: *teaching as emotional work*. It explores teaching as requiring a great deal of emotional work, which takes a toll on teachers over time. Within the context of emotional work and emotional exhaustion in teaching, the teachers conveyed how such experiences helped to conceptualize empathic understanding and expression for them as being broad, complex, and richly varied. Nevertheless, lack of context concerning teaching as emotional work has a negative effect on the relationships between teacher's understanding of empathy and its expression. The participants were frustrated by the context that teaching as emotional work was often overlooked. In fact, they were frequently required to hide their own feelings in their relationships with children, resulting in emotional exhaustion and empathic fatigue. However, the teachers' statements place a further emphasis on considering the context of teaching as emotional labor and point out that it is not just the responsibility of administrators –the community also needs to have a broader knowledge about it, including parents. The teachers described the importance of social context, including the perception of the emotional labor of teaching in these empathic teaching experiences:

I strongly agree the argument that the teacher who is empathized with and cared for by someone can better empathize with another. For instance, if a teacher is shown empathy by parents, colleagues, staff and administrators, or even children in the workplace, she might take more time to work on her frame of mind and willingness to understand or

share others' feelings and perspectives. *We are human beings! We are living!* All living things need to water to live, to connect with someone, and to be understood by someone. We are not trashcans of feeling where others can throw their negative emotions. It's difficult for us to accept and feel one ways. We would like to empathize within the inter-connection with someone. Please don't forget that teachers and teaching are emotional experiences or labor, like any other social service work. (Kang)

I would like teaching to be considered in the context that the whole process of teaching consumes surprising amounts of emotion and energy. Interference with emotional work is not limited to particular social service works. Many people seem to perceive that preschool teachers working in the field of early childhood caring and education, should always smile, even in situations of empathic fatigue and emotional exhaustion. For example, comedians make jokes for the audience, even in depressed situations. In the same manner, we are in position to be depressed or stressed, however we aren't able to directly express or uncover such negative feelings. Thus, we spend our energy on regulating our emotions or showing resiliency by only expressing positive emotions. Teaching is one of the professions with the highest requirement regarding consumption of emotion. It is also necessary for the teacher to participate in training for how to treat and deal with empathy fatigue during emotional work. That's the way to get enough room to empathize. (Moon)

The findings show key influences upon the ways in which the teachers' empathic understanding and expressions are shaped and reshaped over time. Through their own perceptions, their views reveal that the school cultures and social contexts in which they work influence teachers' expressions of empathy as much as they understand and conceptualize it.

Cultural bonding. The third subtheme of cultural bonding represents how cultural contexts connect with or influence teacher's perceptions of empathy, resulting in the display of these contexts in their classroom. The participants' statements mainly focused on the effects of cultural contexts on the constructions of their own perspectives on teacher empathy towards their children. Thus, I held follow-up interviews and a focus group discussion based upon the teachers' statements regarding the relationships between South Korean cultural contexts and the teachers' understanding of empathy and its expression, as described in detail in chapter 3.

Generally, empathy includes two main components: cognitive empathy and emotional empathy (Tettegah & Anderson, 2007). In exploring the notion that teacher's cognitive empathy relates to their thoughts as influenced by cultural factors, I take into account Richard Nisbett's (2004) assertion that culture and social contexts affect thinking, perceptions, and behavior. For instance, he explained the idea that the way Asians and Westerners think is fundamentally different. Regarding the mode of thought or cognition, explained Nisbett, Westerners represent the values of 'individual distinctiveness' or 'independence', whereas Asians demonstrate the values of 'harmonious social relations' or 'interdependence.' Nisbett's insight into these differences provides a valuable context for understanding the socio-cultural factors that affect teacher performance, including empathic understanding and teaching.

In this study, I used a series of images from Nisbett (2004)'s research adapted from Masuda (2008)'s experiments (see Figure 6). An example of simple experiments questioning people's response to a picture, conducted by Masuda, asks Japanese and American college students to rate the expression of the central figure in a cartoon where he is surrounded by other faces. Japanese students said their judgment was influenced by the emotions of the surrounding figures, whereas, the Americans said they were not affected by the background individuals. The

differences may speak to deeply ingrained cultural traits, that Westerners may see emotions as individual feelings, while Japanese see them as inseparable from the feelings of the group (Masuda et al., 2008). With this picture, the participants were asked, “Does he seem to be happy? If so or if not, why do you think that? Back in your classroom, how do you feel about empathy in Korean society, where emphasis is placed on conformity rather than independence?” They responded in these ways:



Figure 6. The facial expressions in the cartoon images: Images from a study that found that Westerners focused on the central figure’s expression, while the Japanese took everyone into account. Adapted from “Placing the face in context: cultural differences in the perception of facial emotion” by Masuda et al., 2008, *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 94(3), 369-381.

Interviewer: Look at the picture and decide what emotion the person in the center is feeling. What did you go for? Happy or sad? Which of these two faces is happier?

Lee: He seems to be a bad person because he is the only one that is happy. He seems to have no concern for others’ feelings. He might be sad due to the surrounding people’s unhappiness (*a congruent emotion*).

Interviewer:How do you feel and think about empathy in Korean society?

Moon: I guess most Koreans think that relationships or interconnectivity with someone is the most important for them to live and work. How to be seen or evaluated by others is the main point. While I'm also working, I'm also concerned about my behaviors and gestures and how they are perceived by the parents, administrators, and kids.

Interviewer: If so, in Korean culture, which emphasizes interconnectedness and acceptance of comprehensive contexts, is it beneficial for the teachers to empathize with all children?

Kang: As I said before, sometimes it happens and sometimes it doesn't. Unfortunately, for me, this culture is likely to cause situations wherein I mask my sincere mind and express feigned empathy. Because I have to build relationships with the parents and the children, pretend empathic behavior is a consideration, even if it is only superficial.

The notion of socio-cultural contexts affecting the construction of empathic understanding and its expression was demonstrated through the participants' statements. All of the participants indicated that their construction and perception of teacher empathy stemmed from social interactions and situations that required them to build well relationships using empathic understanding and acts that contributed to their caring and teaching in the school. They perceived their strengths through a wide-angle or comprehensive view in order to capture someone else's feelings with an emphasis on building relationships. Nevertheless, the teachers conveyed ambivalence and cited both pros and cons in the specific context of South Korea, where there is an overemphasis on interdependence. Even superficial empathy was often shown because the teachers wanted to make a positive impression on all, with the hope of getting positive evaluations and building productive relationships in the workplace. Accordingly, they conveyed their overwhelming concerns about such cultural contexts which impact empathy in

that such contexts are situational and controlled and may undermine the teacher's sincere empathy towards their children.

Theme 4: Discourse of Empathy Understanding and Its Expression

The fourth theme explored and interpreted the explicit views of the teachers who showed a critical understanding of teacher empathy and its expression in their work and included three subthemes:

- Embedded mothering discourse;
- Lack of caring discourse; and
- A breath of empathy for children's negative emotions.

The fourth and key finding of this study relates to its theoretical framework and the literature review in that it illustrates with a variety of existing research how teacher empathy is identified within the construct of the role of maternal thinking in teaching and the discourse of teaching as caring work. In particular, in the field of early childhood caring and teaching, most of the teachers attempted to negotiate their roles as mothers and teachers wherein the values of care were dominant. Further, in terms of the relations between caring and teaching, Nel Noddings (2003) asserted that caring in the schools occurs through reciprocal relationships wherein both the teachers and young children identify, understand, and meet the needs and feelings of others.

In this study, the teachers' understanding of empathy and its acts are interwoven with the teaching as mothering and the deficit caring discourse or even negative conceptions regarding teaching as caring. All of the participants revealed the tendency to pursue connectedness and intimacy with young children through maternal thinking or mothering, resulting in fulfilling their needs. However, the participants hesitated to accept the notion of teaching as caring work because they conceived it resulted in the devaluation of teaching as a profession. In addition, the

third subtheme, a breath of empathy for children's negative emotions, addresses how the teachers encountered unexpected difficulties in showing sincere empathy for young children. Through the exchange of thought and ideas, the fourth theme emerged as an unexpected outcome; the relationship between understanding and expression of teacher empathy is well represented within these discourses. The data that were analyzed and the resulting findings will be discussed in the following sections.

Embedded mothering discourse. When describing teachers' understanding of empathy and acts of empathy, the participants' statements reflected that teacher empathy and its role have been *naturally* constructed within the notion of teaching as mothering that conflates mothering and teaching young children, particularly in reference to preschool teachers. The teachers believed that they had critical roles as mothers, especially as the young children's time in school increased. One teacher said:

I remember one of the parents said that the teachers know more about her daughter than she does because I spend more time with her daughter than she does. When I heard her mention this, I felt a strong sense of responsibility and a need to act considering such a responsibility including getting clues about the child's feelings regarding their needs and I tried to sensitively respond to them like a mom... I always allow my children to keep in mind that I'm a 'mom' to them so I work hard to seek better solutions for them and help them. (Moon)

Another example of a teacher who expressed images of motherhood in describing her responsibilities to empathize as a preschool teacher stated:

Most kids, just as in my own memories of my childhood, might run to their mom if they have an upsetting experience in order to be cared for and understood by their mom.

When my children got upset, they also threw themselves and into my arms like they would to their own mom. A teacher in the preschool is seen as a mom. I hope my children feel there is an alternative or substitute for their mom in the classroom. I would like to help my children in all aspects of their lives, but of course I often cannot.

However, I'm willing to help them and meet their needs whenever I can, even with little things or trivial matters. Because of me, my children feel safety and stability in their emotions and are empathized with. (Moon)

With regards to the discourse of teacher's role as mother, the teachers *naturally* embedded the deep nature of mothering and maternal thinking into their concerted empathic understanding and expression. These statements highlighted the importance and necessity of empathic understanding and acts as for sensitive reading and meeting children's needs. Within the teacher-child relationship, just as with the mother-child relationship, the teachers attempted to understand young children's feelings and perspectives and looked for better solutions in order to build strong, trusting relationships with developing children wherein they fully feel empathy.

Lack of caring discourse. Despite accepting the notion of teaching as mothering, the participants often showed interwoven views on the deficit and caring discourse in their statements about teacher empathy. Teachers' complicated perceptions of teaching as caring resulted in discrepancies between understanding empathy and actual empathic behaviors. For instance, the participants expressed a sense of discomfort towards using the word 'caring' as describing empathic teaching. However, the teachers were overtly observed as acting with responsibility toward young children's social, moral, and emotional development. While the teachers constructed and defined empathic understanding and acts, the statements seemed to be relevant to tasks with attending to the caring of young children. In contrast to showing explicit

caring behaviors, in the three interviews, the teachers were concerned about whether or not I would bring up the views of caring in teaching, resulting in the devaluation of teaching as a profession. In other words, the teachers revealed a lack of perspective on the topic; they did not seem to focus on the strengths and values of caring as teaching as a description of empathy in the classroom. The following examples reflect these views as well as their thoughts on the perceived negative aspects or perspectives of the term ‘caring.’ A teacher stated:

Interviewer:You said you want to provide whatever children need, such as turning on the air conditioner, playing music when they want to dance, taking down the curtain for a child to take a rest and so on. If so, how do you think about the term ‘caring’ in regards to constructing and define your perceptions of teacher empathy?

Moon: Wait! Wait! Is that caring?

Interviewer: I wonder if you think about caring in teaching as describing teacher empathy.

Moon: Oops! (She was obviously flustered) No, I don’t think so (had a sullen face). I guess caring is relevant to part of the work that teachers do in daycare centers. In preschools, I think that educational values should first be included and considered in the works. I think that bathing, feeding, or diapering is related to the term of caring.

Preschool teachers might have concerns about empathy in different ways, including educational values.

In describing the perception of teacher empathy, teachers’ statements overtly represent a ‘lack of caring’ discourse regarding teaching as caring work; this is derived from the prevalent notion in South Korea that early childhood ‘education’ and ‘care’ are considered separately since both of them developed separately from distinct origins (e.g., being delivered under a system of

dual, parallel administration) (Na & Moon, 2003). As a result, such notions contribute to teachers being afraid of using the words *care* or *caring* while explaining their perceptions of empathy. Specifically, teachers feel that calling what they do ‘caring’ devalues teaching as a profession. In regards to this lack of caring discourse, the inconsistency between teachers’ perceptions and behaviors regarding teacher empathy evokes the need for someone to shed new light upon notions of care and caring for the provision of more deep and profound empathy in preschools.

A breath of empathy for children’s negative emotions. The subtheme, breath of empathy for children’s negative emotions, relates to the notion of teaching as emotional work which is mentioned in part of the theoretical framework. Empathy is the ability to perceive and react to another person’s feelings and thoughts. Empathic teachers are sometimes burdened by emotions from nurturing or protecting children in distress. Nevertheless, the participants carefully expressed that they were overtly confronted by the situation wherein much attention had been paid to empathy concerning children’s negative emotions linked to observed anger and aggressive behaviors such as children who frequently hit, kick, bite, slap, push and shove their teachers and peers. The teachers’ statements highlight that it was easy to empathize with pain and suffering as well as joy, pleasure, or happiness, but in turn this often lead to feelings of empathy fatigue.

The concept of empathy fatigue is used to explain the concerns of health care professionals, counselors, or ethical social workers. However, it is possible to apply this to the problems that caregivers and the teachers now face; they all have common ground in that they do emotional work. I interpreted this to mean that the teachers experienced emotional, psychological, or physical exhaustion by helping young children, especially when dealing with aggressive behavior or children in distress. The following examples represent the teachers

drawing a long breath before empathizing with children's negative emotions and behaviors, resulting in experiencing empathy fatigue:

When lots of incidents which need to be controlled by the teacher occur at once, I usually start with a deep sigh and a breath before managing some of the aggressive children's behaviors and conflicts between peers. After solving these issues I felt that I was exhausted and spent a lot of energy. However, it was difficult for me to cope with them in some respects. So I really would like someone to let me know how to deal with such emotional fatigue. When my energy is fully charged, it is easier to care for children with deep and profound empathy. (Lee)

One of my kids regularly throws a tantrum once per month. At the beginning of the semester he more frequently showed aggressive behavior and anger, at least once per week. His change and development has been my pleasure. It's amazing! He became able to perceive his emotions, what was happening and was able to regulate himself. Until this point, however, I struggled in numerous situations to empathize with his negative emotions and behaviors and it really drained my energy to wrestle with him.....teachers' violence was a big social issue until really recently. Definitely, teachers' violence is an unforgivable type of crime. It is untenable. I don't think it is really defensible on moral grounds! (anger) Um... (silence) However, because we are concerned with how many problems are piling up at work, unfortunately some teachers might show negative feedback, reactions, and behaviors towards young children. This type of negative performance does not just depend on a teacher's characteristics or morality; rather, it is possible that anyone could be placed in unfortunate situations (Moon)

These examples reflect that empathic fatigue might negatively affect relationships with young children who have negative emotions. Statements also included the idea that empathy fatigue or satisfaction among teachers who are working is likely to be linked and seen with increasing frequency in those who exhibit aggressive and violent behavior. In this sense, the teachers highlighted the need for opportunities for teachers to acknowledge empathic fatigue and to improve effective strategies for dealing with it. Lastly, the teachers' need for a psychological space to breathe suggests that it is necessary for caregivers or teachers to care for themselves to retain efficacy in caring and teaching and create a mind-space for the provision of the best care and education as possible.

Theme 5: Factors Stimulating or Diminishing of Teacher Empathy

Despite of teachers' desire to support, care for and deeply relate to children, teachers were constrained by conditions in which they worked (Cooper, 2004). The final theme that emerged directly addresses the fourth research question: factors that early childhood teachers perceive as supporting or diminishing their ability to be empathic in caring and teaching. The teachers in this study acknowledged that some supports within the school context existed but they voiced frustration with the constraints, challenges, and dilemmas, which they perceived as limiting their attention to teacher empathy and to some degree with their own biases and lack of spaces to understand and enact teacher empathy in their caring and interactions with young children. Although the significance of empathy in caring and education became clear, teachers often showed a lack of empathy in understanding, communicating with, and helping young children. This was in contrast to what the participants believed to be essential and what their young children might want and need. The findings revealed a number of factors affecting the quality of empathy in classrooms, issues commonly discussed during the three individual

interviews and the follow-up focus group interview. The final theme addresses and is in accordance with the components of the conceptual framework: Cooper's (2004) assertion regarding constraints on empathy, Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) the importance of teachers' social and emotional competence (SEC), well-being in the development and maintenance of supportive teacher-child relationships, and wellbeing for all in the classroom.

Constraints and challenges. First, the teachers identified class size or the teacher-child ratio as a major contributor to whether they might cultivate or decline individual interactions with young children, or whether they might show deep and profound empathy or not. In situations where the teacher-child ratio was out of balance, the participants were unlikely to take the time for individual conversations. In contrast, when working with small groups or individual children, the teachers stated they were more likely to understand individual children's needs and read their minds and perspectives, resulting in building strong, trusting relationships between teachers and children. In accordance with this observation, one teacher who was interviewed stated:

I would like to touch and care for more than one child at once. Unfortunately, this might be difficult for most teachers. During activities with the whole classroom, I often neglected some responses from the children or finished them in a hurry to manage the whole classroom. Meanwhile, the teachers were responsible for considering various children's needs, feeling at once, as if they were walking along a tightrope. (Kang)

Another teacher echoed the same sentiment, stating, "With a low teacher-child ratio, I could much more deeply respond with sincere reactions to all. I know this is all teachers' desire." These statements reflect that a high teacher-child ratio causes a lack of time for individual interactions with each child that might lead to displays of restricted and superficial empathy.

Secondly, the teachers perceived the well-balanced relationships with the parents as the major contributor to cultivating mindsets in which they were fully ready to empathize with young children. I interpreted this to mean that both experienced empathy and mutual respect in their partnerships with the parents were motivators for the teachers to show empathy toward children. One teacher remembered how a particular parent's messages often made her feel recharged and revitalized her energy for teaching and caring. Her statements reflect that empathic experiences with the parents lead to the teachers building self-esteem and having more professional satisfaction, resulting in maintaining sufficient emotional room to express sincere empathy and care for young children in a profoundly empathic way. In this sense, the findings support the view that teacher-parent relationships form a significant context as indirect influences on developing children.

Additionally, the maintenance of balance between a teacher's personal life and their professional role in teaching impacts their ability to provide empathy for young children. Teacher's stress is not a new problem in classroom. In regards to such stressors as barriers to empathy, interview statements highlighted the influence that a teacher's personal life places on teacher's work concerning empathic understanding: One teacher recalled her teaching experiences during her first year. At that time, she experienced a personal life crisis when both of her parents were sick and had to undergo major surgeries. She was confronted not only with the challenge of being a novice teacher, but also with the difficulty of significant stress in her personal life. When reflecting on the imbalance she felt between her personal life and work during that time, she noted that having a depressed or stressed psychological state has a critical impact on a teacher's performance including their empathic interactions, caring, and teaching. An attenuated psychological state made it difficult for the teacher to practice self-care, resulting in a

lack of attention being shown toward the children's feelings and thoughts.

Finally, physical strength as well as psychological state seemed to arise in some of the teachers' interviews as a challenge when trying to care for children in empathic ways. On this topic, the teachers' statements often focused on the impact of physical enervation or weaknesses as one of constraints for empathy: they perceived that their physical states were often characterized by a lack of energy to empathize. One teacher said, "We realize that we definitely need to figure out how to have more energy throughout our days." Another classroom teacher echoed the same sentiment, stating, "There are a lot of things that demand teachers' attention, which leads to being swamped with a heavy workload." In the midst of such challenges, opportunities for creating empathic relationships became impossible, as indicated below:

As I reflect upon my teaching experiences, I realize that I wasn't able to show empathic responses evenly to all throughout the day. At the end of the day, I felt exhausted so I was lacking in my ability to empathize, especially if the day had a lot of accidents or conflicts between the children. I'm certain that I rarely showed sincere empathy in the afternoon as much as I did in the morning. At that time, I just showed superficial empathy regardless of my beliefs or understanding of empathy. With a fully charged body, a teacher is able to control their mindset in order to accept and read children's minds. (Lee)

This highlights a finding that teachers' physical energy is directly linked to teachers' social and emotional states. Due to the heavy workload, the participants often felt that they were emotionally fatigued, which they believed prevented them from treating young children with empathic attitudes and behaviors.

Overall, the teachers' interviews emphasized the various aspects of factors that either

prevent or increase their ability to practice teacher empathy: quality or amount of time for individual interactions with children; the maintenance of balanced teacher-parent relationships; and teacher's physical, emotional, and psychological health. Within such constraints, the teachers experienced difficulties in cultivating self-emotional competence and caring for themselves, in turn, leading to a lack of consideration or empathy or displays of pretend empathy.

Dilemmas and conflicts. The participants used the word “dilemma” several times throughout the three interviews in relation to factors that might prevent teacher empathy. The teachers showed remarkable similarities concerning being placed in internal conflict situations wherein they were required to prioritize empathy for young children in their interactions and relationships. One of the dilemmas, *social stereotypes* of preschool teachers, was a main contributor to teachers' prioritization of what images needed attention first, thus preventing them from fully caring for the young children in their classrooms in sincere empathic ways. One teacher expressed:

I guess that many people might think that preschool teachers should always smile or be kind and gentle. Such images form a basic social stereotype of preschool teachers. Some parents even seem to expect teachers to demonstrate unconditional acceptance of their kids, despite their faults, because preschool teachers are supposed to be kind. Regardless of my sincerity, sometimes I felt that I had to meet or satisfy this stereotype. (Lee)

The teachers' dilemmas highlight that stereotypical images of teachers give rise to serious distortions regarding the reflection of professional reality and attribute to the formation of psychological barriers to show sincere empathy in natural ways.

In addition to social stereotypes, *social expectations* of the teachers' impact teacher empathy. Despite the possible advantages of social expectations for teaching, the teachers

revealed that they were concerned that they might also be a barrier to showing empathic mindsets and attitudes that have relevance to moral aspects of profound empathy (see Cooper's empathy classification in Chapter 2). One of the social expectations of a teacher's role is that teachers should treat all children with fairness; yet, teachers indicated they were likely to treat them with equality to manage the whole class. However, treating all children in a class equally is not the same as fairness. While equality means giving everyone the same resources, equity means giving each children access to the resources they need to learn and flourish. The teachers perceived treating children fairly meant that they should treat children in ways that were most appropriate to their individual needs, not necessarily the same (equally). In embracing this notion as an educational belief, the teachers' statements revealed unexpected concerns that conflict between fairness and equality may negatively impact empathic interactions with individual children. Certainly, children may not start from the same place and need same things. The teachers represented that occasionally they might neglect an individual child's interests or feelings due to the pressure to treat every child fairly and maintain harmony within the group in a short time.

The following two passages demonstrate teachers' concerns that children were vulnerable to feeling as though they were not empathized with by the teachers, especially in situations regarding classroom rules. I observed when a girl showed a toy that she had brought from home to the teacher, the teacher said, "Don't you remember our rule? Unfortunately, you can't play with it in our classroom. Please keep it in your bag before your peers come into the classroom." The girl replied with a sullen face, "Phooey, I didn't mean to play. I just showed it to you." In this case, the teacher was unable to read the child's mind or anticipate her intentions due to having to adhere to classroom rules. Another teacher said:

I frequently said that if I allow you to do something, other friends also might want to do as you do...Even though I treat everyone fairly, some of the children might feel and think it is not fair because of differences or gaps in standards between children's reasoning and teachers' reasoning regarding the concept of fairness. I think teaching the difference between equality and fairness is important to promote empathy. Within such conflict situations, children might be hurt in un-empathic ways such as feeling discrimination. (Kang)

Following their own educational perspectives, basically the teachers stand on the perceptions of fairness and teaching children be fairly in the distribution of resources and opportunities to access educational or social experiences. However, they often were in a dilemma between fairness and equality by handling the whole class in a limited time. Instead of understanding fairness, children were likely not to recognize it, but rather to feel as though the teachers were failing to empathize with them because, as young children, they were still egocentric. For that reason, the teachers emphasized that awareness of the difference between fairness and equality may challenge the ability to create classroom cultures of empathy. Thus, the teachers' concerns indicate that they were often confronted with the dilemma between their educational beliefs, treating all children fairly, and respecting individual child's needs, coupled with unpleasant feelings concerning appropriate management of the whole class. Along with these concerns, teachers agreed in the need to respect individual differences, and that equality is not enough to allow for empathizing with all children in the room.

Moreover, the teachers were often faced with additional social expectations of teachers that provided educational value and experience, but conflicted with other roles in accepting children's interests and views: that children's interests derived from a consumer culture directed

their play. Children are ruled by a marketing-driven, media-saturated culture that has a powerful negative influence on many aspects of children's lives and well-being, also known as the commercialization of childhood (Linn, 2010). Despite recognition that children's interests, and therefore much of their play, stemmed from commercial interests within a culture of consumerism, teachers were biased against it. For example, the popular characters from television, games, or media were often talked about by children and the characters and stories became a part of their play. Whenever they had an interest in talking about that, the teachers adamantly said, "Please remember the rules – we promised we don't talk about Turning Mecard (a popular media character) in school." However, the children were often observed continuously talking about it in the corner. Likewise, when the teachers felt that they were not fully a part of children's worlds, and in fact, wished to keep it out of the classroom, they had concerns about their ability to profoundly empathize with such interests.

Furthermore, the teachers were expected to safeguard children's health and well-being. The teachers described what they felt was a dilemma between social expectations regarding teachers' role in protecting children's safety and embracing children's interests. In particular, they felt conflicted regarding children's need to engage in rough and tumble play. Surely, the teachers recognized that rough and tumble play is probably a basic human instinct that allows children to test and practice physical and social skills. Nevertheless, with regards to empathizing with children's interests on such play, the following statement showed that they were unlikely to overlook safety. They noted concerns based on previous experiences and their hopes to meet parents' expectations regarding a teacher's role, as noted:

Mostly children play rough because it's fun! In rough and tumble play, children smile and laugh. However, if a child gets hurt, it also hurts me and I never hear from parents

‘It could happen to anyone during play’ after a child gets hurt. As a teacher, I don’t want to be seen as someone who is not caring for them. That’s the reason why I stop children who engage in rough and tumble play, despite understanding their joyful experiences.

(Kang)

Overall, the teachers’ statements show that they were often confronted with dilemmas or internal conflicts preventing them from caring for young children in empathic ways including social stereotypes and expectations of the preschool teachers such as being kind, treating with fairness, teaching educational values, and protecting young children’s safety and security. While the teachers made an effort to meet the purpose of educational values or beliefs, they also felt concerned about the possibility of ignoring individual children’s needs or ideas in the name of preserving the role of a teacher in society.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented five key findings and showed how they address the study’s research questions and conceptual framework. The participants’ perceptions and experiences were conveyed in the data from individual in-depth interviews, a follow-up focus group interview, classroom observations, and related teaching artifacts. Analyzing across the data, I identified five major themes with several subthemes. In Chapter 5, I consider constraints and challenges to empathy in the classroom in detail.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Currently, empathy appears to be a popular topic in a range of fields, including politics, education, psychology, neuroscience and sociology – its broad appeal and relevance indicate both the interrelatedness of our world and the increasing recognition of the fact that we all rely on relationships that are to be valued as the basis of all successful interactions (MacIntyre et al., 2016). Empathy is necessary for increasing sustainability and the development of any relationship (e.g., human-human, human-nature) through constant change. As Goleman (1995) stated, “For all rapport, the root of caring, stems from emotional attunement, from the capacity for empathy” (p. 96). Empathy is a key to the formation of good relationships and an essential skill in conducting successful or continuous communication, interpersonal skills, and harmony (Howe, 2013).

Unfortunately, women, children and the elderly, who already tend to be a part of more vulnerable groups in society, often become even more vulnerable in the face of constant change. In an extremely competitive society such as South Korea, children in particular are more susceptible to stress, including an increased susceptibility to anxiety and depression, which may result in a lack of care for others and their surroundings. To cope with this unfortunate situation, the teachers in this study highlighted that it is necessary for children to develop resiliency, and teacher empathy is a huge contributor to building resilience in young children (Brooks, & Goldstein, 2008). In schools, empathy plays a crucial role in the development of interpersonal relations, including secure attachments between a teacher and their children, caring for the wellbeing of others, and facilitating cooperation among group members (Decety & Cowell, 2015).

More specifically, in any educational setting, the care and nurturing we experience in early childhood affects our ability to empathize with others later in life (Rifkin, 2010). Thus, having a perspective based in empathy emphasizes rich and in-depth research in the field of early childhood education at this time. A child's empathic capabilities are fostered and emulated by the responses and behaviors they see in their parents and teachers, who have an emotional connection and relationship with the child (Hoffman, 2000; Hojat, 2007). For example, it is easier for children who are cared for by empathic teachers to successfully form empathic abilities through their experience of acceptance and understanding in their everyday interactions (Krzmaric, 2014). Thus, teachers must be held responsible for serving as role models for empathic behaviors, modeling empathy through their own relationships with young children and also between their peers (Howe, 2013). In other words, teacher empathy in the field of early childhood education has been magnified as a more important contributor to the developing child (Eisenber, 1989; Panfile & Laible, 2012). The teachers in this study were aware of a need for teacher empathy in their teaching and caring and perceived their empathic attitudes and expressions as having a strong impact on their children.

Moreover, as human and social interactions are at the center of effective functioning, empathy is an invaluable cognitive and affective skill for nurturing all types of positive relationships, whether they are with children, colleagues, parents, or administrators (MacIntyre et al., 2016). The teachers in this study perceived that empathy was major contributor to building successful connectedness through intimacy with children and their parents; in turn this helped them to form the foundation of a successful working relationship. The findings from this study are striking in that they point to empathy as the center of effective functioning, which is especially relevant for raising teachers' awareness and professionalism, with a focus on authentic

communication, quality of individual interactions, and socio-cultural influences. Certainly, empathy is included as a major component of the field of early childhood caring and education; thus, teachers' awareness of and professional ability to understand both empathy and its expression are required in order to enhance the work of caring and education in schools.

Although the needs for empathy in early childhood caring and education is clear, recent research on empathy has been focused mostly in the empathic ability of elementary or middle school teachers' and their beliefs related to students from culturally diverse backgrounds (Cooper, 2004). Most notably, the absence of observational data has led to a lack of general understanding regarding the expression of empathy through nonverbal behaviors (Peck, 2014). Similarly, there is a lack of qualitative research on teacher's empathic attitudes and their role in everyday empirical teaching experiences (Graig & Murphy, 2000; Tettegh & Anderson, 2007). In this study, fortunately, observing for nonverbal expressions of empathy and the teachers' hidden or less obvious thoughts through interviews allows for the enrichment of the overall body of research on the subject. In particular, there is very little research on empathy that reflects the needs and characteristics of early childhood education and classrooms in South Korea. Hence, this study adds value to the greater body of research on empathy in early childhood education by exploring the depth of teachers' understanding, awareness, and expressions of empathy in the South Korean context.

Throughout this study, the findings certainly pointed toward the need for teacher empathy in early childhood classroom. Teachers who made empathic statements held strong views on the topic. I base my advocacy on the assumption that empathy allows teachers to understand, feel, communicate with, and respond to the needs of the children with whom they work (Peck, 2014). I also provided a number of examples of instances in which empathy was

lacking as well as instances in which empathy was present. The findings from the study were in accordance with Cooper's empathy classification (Cooper, 2004, 2011). The teachers perceived fundamental empathy as intimacy in terms of maintaining a strong feeling of connectedness with young children through warmth and acceptance. Especially, profound empathy was most evident in caring and teaching with young children where everyone was engaged in positive, equal, mutually respectful and responsive relationships (Cooper, 2004).

Teachers' Comprehensive Perspectives: The Relationship between Empathy and Morality

In addition to being useful for classifying empathy, it is particularly remarkable that the teachers' perspectives from this study show that empathy is related to the moral principles of caring and justice (Hoffman, 1987, 2001). First, empathy and caring work in the same direction – toward considering the well-being of others. Second, although the link between empathy and justice is less straightforward than the link between empathy and caring, empathy may guide most people's affective and motivational structures before moral principles are considered. Thus, the more empathic person should consider caring, need, equality, and equity based on effort, not on output (Hoffman, 1987, 2001).

In regard to the relationship between empathy and morality, the teachers characterized empathy by the conflict between empathy-charged caring and justice. Empathy can contribute to both sides of caring-justice dilemmas because of empathy's congruence or bonding with both (Hoffman, 2001). The idea of justice may be used to describe both a society as well as personal relationships in which people are treated fairly and they are respected as equals; caring, in contrast, is more often used to describe personal relationships in which nurturing and interpersonal relations are highly valued (Strike, 1999). These differing aims and definitions may shed light upon why teachers may experience a dilemma in which caring for one's own needs

may need to be constrained by justice. An example of a caring vs. justice conflict might occur when a child is required to be cared for by an individual to meet a particular need and the resources and services must be distributed equally. In this study, teachers' overt concerns over conflicts between caring and justice highlighted the idea that teacher empathy should be acted upon with an explicit focus on improving 'equity' in education over equality: educational resources and opportunities should be allocated equitably to all for distributive justice according to individual needs (e.g. individual gaps in developmental status). This might also arise when concerns over the children's best interests ('caring') and the teacher's role in implementing educational value ('justice') when commercial interests are involved. Different moral principles (i.e., caring, justice) may apply differently in different situations.

Strike (1999) suggested that *moral pluralism* is a better way to describe the tension between caring and justice in particular cases where caring and justice appear to be deeply different. Thus, the appreciation of moral complexity may be helpful in order to promote tolerance and reciprocity, where people seek to find a balance or harmony in their lives and the experiences or perspectives of others.

Based upon teachers' perspectives, empathy in moral principles is also characterized by conflicting moral claimants (Hoffman, 2001). It is possible that empathy may be biased in several ways and Hoffman (1987, 2001) noted this as one of empathy's limitations. One of them is the 'familiarity-similarity bias': people are more empathic to others who are familiar and similar to themselves (e.g., family, in-group members, and people have similar life, professional experiences) than to other who are different (Hoffman, 1987). In regard to this familiarity bias, this study shows that teachers empathize to a greater degree with colleagues whose professional needs and concerns are similar to their own, but they often do not feel the same reciprocity in

empathy from the parents. This may, perhaps be due to the fact that many parents do not share the same professional experiences or concerns as teachers.

Familiarity bias may increase antipathy and intensify conflicts between teachers and parents. It can also cause injustice and an unfair balance of power between the two groups; such unequal power distribution often contributes to empathy gaps between giving and taking empathy (Stern & Divecha, 2015). Fortunately, familiarity bias can be reduced when empathy is embedded in moral principles (Hoffman, 2001). For example, teachers and parents can participate together in moral education programs including direct, face-to-face contact and training in role-taking procedures. Such ‘multiple empathizing’ includes efforts to raise people’s degrees of empathy for outgroup members, resulting in generating empathic feelings for others in different circumstances and more empathic responses (Hoffman, 1987).

Surprisingly, this study found that unconscious empathy, sincere empathy, mutual/relational empathy, and an imbalance in power relationships tended to characterize the relationships that teachers had with parents, highlighting the impact of situations and context on teacher empathy. The teachers highlighted the crucial role of sincere empathy in interpersonal connectedness within mutually respectful and responsive relationships. In any healthy relationships, both the care giver and the one cared for are considered as equal powers in term of empathic understanding. In schools, teacher empathy should be understood within a variety of contexts because certain situations may act as barriers or supports for the teachers in conceptualizing empathy and its expression. Ultimately, these unexpected outcomes supported the theoretical framework of the study as well as other recent research on the topic. These outcomes are discussed in greater detail in this chapter. First, I present an overall summary of the findings presented in Chapter 4.

The first finding demonstrates how preschool teachers perceived and understood empathy in their relationships with young children. The first theme represents teachers' understanding regarding the nature and characteristics of empathy and its role and includes three main subthemes: fulfilling mind, wishes, and desires; empathy as relations and reciprocal empathy, and sincere vs. pretended empathy. The first and key finding of this study is in accordance with its theoretical framework in that it points out how the teachers understand and enact the nature and characteristics of teacher empathy in their relationships with young children. This finding relates to the following components of Cooper's (2004, 2011) empathy classification in the conceptual framework for this study: fundamental empathy, profound empathy, and functional empathy. Essentially, the teachers perceived that teacher empathy has a pivotal role for initiating healthy connectedness, used the term 'rapport', and building strong relationships through empathic attitude, mindset. In addition to fundamental empathy, the teachers attempted to treat young children with profound or deeper understanding, to demonstrate concern in empathic ways, and to model prosocial behaviors while cultivating an empathic atmosphere. These situations in which children learn, include sharing feelings and perspectives and helping and caring for other by mirroring their teacher's empathic gestures, behaviors, or languages.

With regard to the nature of empathy and its role, the teachers outlined their intent to read children's minds, needs, and desires, and then fulfill them. The teachers utilized empathic abilities for reading children's internal minds including describing their feelings and behaviors in positive ways. Furthermore, the teachers worked to satisfy their children's minds, wishes, and desires. Thus, these situations all occurred in sequence as a part of the empathic interaction process. Another part of the nature of empathy which the teachers perceived was that interactive,

reciprocal or mutual empathy was more overt in some situations. In terms of interactive empathy, equal power relationships between the teacher and child or teacher and parent are critical contributors to finding a balance between giving and receiving empathy, consequently preventing empathy gaps between power differences. Despite understanding empathy, the teachers often expressed feelings of guilt for showing pretend empathy due to the constraints to expressing sincere empathy in authentic ways. Such constraints and challenges are discussed details in theme 5.

With the second research question, I worked to comprehend in what the ways the teachers acted out and expressed empathy and how this affected their relationships and interactions with young children. The second finding showed that the participants exhibited empathy through the distinctive behaviors and dispositions; sometimes, they were aware of the way in which they expressed empathy and sometimes they didn't. Teachers' empathic expressions were characterized by two things: that a part of these acts were made with the intent to empathize with the children and model morality through planning the explicit curriculum prior to interactions; and that some of these behaviors occurred naturally, regardless of the teacher's awareness of their own behavior.

Four subthemes emerged in response to the second research question regarding teachers' acts and expressions of empathy. The first subtheme is a willingness to empathize in the explicit curriculum. Teachers' understanding and expressions concerning the differences between children's empathic abilities were demonstrated in the explicit curriculum: while planning and managing the curriculum, the teachers demonstrated their intent to show empathy through considering the types of play, activities, materials, and lesson plans or contents that might elicit positive emotions and experiences for their young children. Teachers considered the types of

play and planned various activities to communicate with the children, understanding and sharing children's feelings and perspectives resulting in a display profound empathy and modeling morality.

The second subtheme, empathy that is unconscious, but visible in acts and expressions relates to how the teachers naturally showed their own empathy without awareness of it; this was captured by the researcher while examining: sensitive responses to children's needs, flexible management of schedule, mindfulness for emotional coaching, empathic communication with positive language, and open inferences. These teachers' empathy expressions highlight deeply getting into child's worlds by opening towards and accepting their feeling, thoughts without any judgments, references, or interpretations that were often disturbed by constraints.

The third subtheme, affective empathy in caring, teaching, speaks to the significance of the integrated nature of affection and cognition in caring and teaching. This theme has been juxtaposed with the ideas of Cooper, Nodding, and Vygotsky that involve both affection and cognition to understand caring and teaching. The teacher empathy expressed through the 'knowing' of the child, control level of difficulty in tasks which children do, and displaying children's artwork highlights that the teachers are required to observe children's behaviors and emotions and then apprehend children's needs for treating children with appropriate supports.

The fourth subtheme, empathy, cooperation, and sustainability, includes the concept that teacher empathy is acted out with the purpose of providing a variety of experiences for developing children in order to expand the boundaries of groups to empathize by: encouraging children to embrace other groups and cooperate with each other in a competitive atmosphere; preserving a continuity of feeling; providing integrative experiences through partnership with families; and facilitating empathy as a means of sustainable development for young children such as caring for

living things and nature beyond human beings.

The third theme that emerged in response to the third research question addressed the relationships between teacher understanding on empathy and its expression. The third finding reveals that *context* is a significant influence on the nature, characteristics, and degree of empathy that is expressed by most teachers. While qualitative research does not make generalizations, others may be able to identify with the kinds of experiences that include embracing various contexts into empathic caring and teaching. The participants' experiences showed remarkable similarities in showing their empathy in different ways within each situation that depended upon the specific circumstances

The three subthemes for this section that emerged were: individual differences in situational preferences; the contemporary context of teaching as emotional work, and cultural bonding to empathy understanding and its expression. First, the teachers indicated their perceptions of empathy as being constructed and internalized through teaching experiences, their personal lives, and empathic relationships. The second finding relates to the part of components of the conceptual framework: contemporary context of teaching as emotional work. They revealed that the school cultures and social contexts in which they work were significant contributors for teachers to internalize empathy expression as much as they understood it. Additionally, the teachers focused on the effects of South Korean cultural contexts on the constructions of their own perspectives on teacher empathy towards their children. They conveyed that the context which emphasizes interconnectedness or harmony negatively affects teachers' attention to other's evaluations and causes an overwhelming concern for merely maintaining the relationship. Unfortunately, due to these influences, the teachers were likely to display pretend or superficial empathy in such contexts.

Discourse of empathy is the fourth theme that emerged in response to the third questions regarding relationships between teachers' understanding of empathy and empathic acts in interactions with young children. It has three subthemes: embedded mothering discourse, lack of caring discourse, and breath of empathy for children's negative emotions. The fourth and key finding of this study relates to its theoretical framework and literature review, however parts of the findings are interwoven the discourse of between teaching as mothering and caring. All of the participants revealed the tendency to pursue connectedness and intimacy with young children through maternal thinking or mothering, resulting in fulfilling their needs. The teachers naturally embedded the deep nature of mothering and maternal thinking into their empathic understanding and expression. However, the participants hesitated to accept the notion of teaching as caring work because they conceived it resulted in the devaluation of teaching as a profession. Lack of caring discourse causes an inconsistency in the between teachers' perceptions and behaviors regarding teacher empathy. In addition, the third subtheme, a breath of empathy for children's negative emotions, addresses times in which the teachers encountered unexpected difficulties in showing sincere empathy for young children. The teachers reflected that empathy fatigue or emotional exhaustion might negatively affect their relationships with young children.

The final finding describes the challenges, dilemmas and conflicts that the participants expressed and they perceived as hindering their attention to teacher empathy and affecting the quality of empathy in classroom. With regards to the constraints on empathy, the teachers represented that class size or the teacher-child ratio was the major factor in determining their ability to display deep and profound empathy through individual conversation. Secondly, the participants overtly perceived that a healthy teacher-parent relationship indirectly affects how teachers treat children in sincerely and profoundly empathic ways. Reciprocal empathic

communication and mutual respect helped the teachers to be ready to empathize with young children in the classroom. Next, the teachers focused on the stressful psychological state and feeling physically exhausted as being barriers to expressing empathy, because the heavy workload enables them to feel emotional fatigue, in turn, leading to lack of empathic understanding and attitudes. Finally, the teachers' statements show that they were confronted with dilemmas or internal conflicts preventing them to care for young children in empathic ways: social stereotypes and expectations of the preschool teachers such as being kind, treating with fairness, teaching educational values, and protecting young children's safety and security that conflicted with caring for children's interests in authentic ways.

Unexpected, but Visible Outcomes

The first unexpected outcome from this research was that empathy was often conceived as an *unconscious competency* of teachers. In other words, the teachers intended to empathize with the children and model morality through planning the explicit curriculum prior to their interactions in the classroom, but generally did not conceive the types of empathic expressions they would act out; rather, these expressions occurred naturally through the tone of their language, gestures, and subtle nuances. The teachers' statements represented that they perceived empathy as an unconscious competency. They often said that they did not think about how they were showing empathy; rather they tended to focus on the children's responses and forming attachments with the children's lives. To be specific, they were familiar with how they planned the explicit curriculum and the instruments that might be used for the encouragement of children's empathy including controlling the difficulty of tasks with affection in learning as well as modeling prosocial behaviors and morals.

Relatively speaking, the teachers' unconscious empathic expressions were captured by

accident and later they reflected upon their own behaviors while considering the notion of teaching as mothering and caring, albeit with ambivalence toward caring. Unfortunately, they often felt guilty and concerned about the negative facets of their unconscious behaviors that might cause an un-empathic climate that may neglect or ignore children's needs and interests. The findings from this study suggest that teachers need to better establish the concept of teacher empathy and improve their ability to take a sensitive mindset toward empathy, perhaps even obviously discerning between acts that are empathic or not. Hence, teachers' perceptions of empathy as unconscious competency need to be substantialized into visible professional performance and efficacy through the implementation of effective training for teacher empathy.

Moreover, the teachers highlighted that sincere empathy in the early childhood classroom is fundamental to providing profound empathy. Sincere empathy was seen as crucial for building strong relationships with children. Gibbs (2006) argued in favor of authenticity in relationships, involving deep interpersonal connectedness between teachers and children. In this study, however, the teachers were concerned about and even blamed themselves for their failures to capture the responses of children and meet their needs in authentic ways, including high-quality individual interactions, due to various constraints. The findings suggest that we need to focus more on to how to deal with such constraints in order to enable the teachers to show genuine empathy. Regarding the nature of teacher empathy, another finding emerged that empathy was relational or mutual in interactions. Teachers who made empathic statements felt confident in their ability to balance their relationships with children and their parents. The teachers of this study believed that authentic empathy ensures interactive and mutually respectful relationships with others (i.e., children, parents) wherein all of the members have an equal balance of power.

Furthermore, the teachers' ideas were of undeniable importance, primarily because they are considered as essential for constructing the concept of empathy and affording empathic caring and coherence in understanding. However, differences emerged between the content of their ideas in the interviews and the content of their expressions as observed in the classroom. The complexity of the idea-behavior link has become more striking as it has become essential to consider teachers' ideas as interrelated (Miguel, Valentim, & Carugati, 2009). Thus, it was obvious that teacher empathy should be understood within complex and holistic views. The findings from this study indicate that teacher empathy may be shown through various ways, depending on individual situational preferences, as well as cultural and social contexts that may act as constraints. In one example, empathy appeared to be a very situational cognitive process as the context had an effect on empathy. The privacy and meaning of the specific context influenced the occurrence or intensity of the empathy that was displayed. Teacher empathy in this study was not only characterized by the teacher's quality, virtue or disposition. Rather, displays of empathy developed over time and were strongly influenced by context (Cooper, 2004). Thus, it is impossible to assess or measure teacher empathy without considering the specific context in which it is displayed.

Unfortunately, despite the necessity of empathy for managing and engaging classes, physical working conditions and psychological states became barriers for the teachers to accepting the feelings and interests of individuals and to modeling a personal and caring approach. Teachers spent more time enforcing rules and managing classes than they did forging personal relationships with their children. In this weak moral climate, teachers cannot understand children or attach to them strongly enough to engender or promote mutual respect, often resulting in alienation, neglect, ignorance, and undervaluing of the individual (Cooper, 2004).

Overall, the findings of this study strongly suggest that teacher empathy synthetically links to the personal, social, and cultural contexts surrounding the teachers and their perceptions of empathy in caring and teaching.

Empathy Fatigue and Professional Burnout

The study identified a number of factors affecting the quality of teacher empathy in the classroom. As one of the contexts that served as a significant constraint in regard to empathic expression, empathy fatigue and burnout had a negative effect on teachers' empathic understanding and expression. Empathy fatigue is a form of burnout characterized by extreme mental and emotional exhaustion, and it is a prevalent occupational hazard in the caring professions, where people hold themselves to a high level of integrity and service in their work (Krop, 2013). Pines (1993) reported that it, "happens most often among those who work with people and results from the emotional stress that arises during the interaction with them" (p. 387). Figley (1995) described the "the cost of caring" when discussing empathy fatigue; this cost can impact the professional and personal lives of teachers, professionals who may experience faulty judgment, irritability, fatigue, and distracting thoughts, detachment from children, and decreased quality of work.

Along the same lines, findings from this study also described that the teachers may have experienced some degree of empathy fatigue or burnout. Empathic teachers seemed to exhaust themselves in a deep physical and emotional way by treating children with profound empathy. Certainly, showing empathy is a regular part of teaching, but there are times when teachers feel that no matter how much empathy they display, it is never enough. Traditionally, empathy fatigue is a theoretical framework that researchers have applied for helping human service professions other than teaching (Hoffman et al., 2007). However, this study highlighted that teacher empathy

needs to be understood in terms of the notion of teaching as caring and emotional work. Above all, teachers' mental health or psychological state needs to be understood in relation to how they empathize with the feeling and perspectives of young children. Cultivating a positive inner space is a great way to overcome empathy fatigue (Krop, 2013). Krop (2013) argued that caring without getting tired is to care with a self-awareness of teachers' own responses, expectations and needs. In other words, teachers need to understand that acting with empathy includes being empathic toward their own needs and feelings. . By reframing how teachers understand empathy, it may be possible for teachers to care without burning out and to be more effective in their caring for children (Krop, 2013).

With regards to effective teaching and caring, teacher empathy is also key for breaking out of a vicious cycle of negative disciplinary behavior and feedback. One South Korean study (Lee et al., 2013) investigated the structural basis for many different variables related to negative discipline behavior. They found that teachers' job stress and empathy had a statistically significant direct effect on their negative disciplinary behaviors, while workplace support had a significant positive effect on teachers' empathy. In other words, when teachers' job stress was low and empathy was high, teachers' negative discipline behaviors decreased. Similarly, as workplace support increased, teacher expressions of empathy increased in frequency. Hence, the findings from these studies brought attention to teachers' emotional exhaustion and confirmed that empathy fatigue in teaching and caring negatively impacts the quantity and quality of empathic caring and effective communications with children.

Certainly, teacher empathy is significant and needs to be fostered in both pre-service and in-service professional development for teachers. In opposition to the threat of empathy fatigue along with other stressors leading to professional burnout, it is important that teachers sustain

boundaries for their own well-being and self-care while conserving empathic responses and their ability to construct partnerships with parents and family members (Peck, 2014). The findings point to potential implications for professional satisfaction of teachers for training on teacher empathy, with a focus on empathy in teacher preparation programs and renewed perspectives for professionals on creating culture of empathy, which I describe in the following sections. In addition, the voices of teachers from the study may help to cultivate external contexts for developing teacher empathy.

Empathy and Professional Satisfaction

In the era of limitless competition and constant change wherein young children are prone to suffer from stress, emphasis is inevitably placed on the teacher's role as a healer. Because of this, and in response to social changes and increasing demands of educational provision of maladjusted or challenging children, preschool teachers are responsible for understand these children in authentic ways and appropriately coping with their concerns. The findings from this study highlighted the need for empathy as increasingly significant in the workplace as well as the use of partnerships and mutual relationships including teacher-parent and teacher-child relationships, where social emotional competence is a critical factor in success.

A great deal of research on teacher empathy demonstrates that empathy training is helpful for teachers and professionals in enhancing their own self-efficacy. Katz and St. Dennis (1991) suggested a model of the teacher as a healer and teaching as a healing process. In this model, teachers are involved with students in healing as a “transition toward meaning, balance, connectedness, and wholeness” (Katz, & St. Dennis, 1991, p.24). In an educational setting, the teacher as a healer is one who, informed by empathic understanding, seeks to foster mutual respect and interconnectedness based upon warmth. As professionals, teachers must learn to

respond to children with empathy; in this way, children learn to respond to each other with empathy. By satisfying the role of a healer (Katz, 1972), teachers are able to achieve professional satisfaction and self-efficacy. Likewise, the results of this study have meaning as a fundamental study for the development of a teacher training program for increasing teacher empathy, which prevents children's maladjustment and supports children's growth and development based upon the idea of the teacher as a healer.

Full-humanness, Well-being, and Happiness

In terms of professional satisfaction, achieving "full humanness" is a worthy objective for teachers: full-humanness inspires teachers to a place of joy, creativity, caring; all qualities that make up empathic experiences (Levine, 2013). Maslow is the most well-known for his theory of the hierarchy of needs and mention of the concept of 'full humanness' through self-actualization. According to Maslow's (1943, 1954) theory, at the highest level on the hierarchy, self-actualization means experiencing something fully and selflessly, with full concentration; in this moment of experience, the person is fully human. Self-actualized people tend to have intimate relationships with others that are profound, sincere, and long-lasting, rather than superficial. Moreover, self-actualized people are characterized as perceiving and understanding themselves and others without stereotypes, judgments, inferences, or interpretations (Maslow, 1943, 1954). With empathy, people fully respect the core of the other, and they make fewer inferences, judgments, and interpretations, ultimately bringing more mindfulness into their relationships (Richo, 1999). The findings from this study also imply the necessity of sincere empathy for teachers to reach full humanness and self-actualization in both their professional and personal lives, allowing them to more fully empathize with others, like a revolving door.

Moreover, the notion of well-being embedded in these teachers' constructs of empathic

understanding and acts demand that they care of themselves, be cared for, and be supported by others in regard to their emotional, social, and physical well-being. Teacher's well-being correlates with healthy teacher-children relationships wherein teachers manage classroom quality and show empathic attitudes toward children (Jennings, 2015; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Park (2015) argued that the improvement of early childhood teachers' empathic abilities correlates to an increase in not only the teachers' own happiness in terms of their work and personal lives, but also to an overall shift in understanding and perspectives toward themselves and their children. In this study, through self-acceptance and professional satisfaction, the teachers were likely to make space for empathic caring and teaching. Children in school were very aware of the mental and physical state of their teachers. This study implies that teachers' well-being is interrelated with teachers' job or professional satisfaction, which influences their awareness and construction of empathic understandings and acts. Thus, the findings from this study suggest that we might need to think a bit more carefully about how teachers construct 'empathic caring and teaching' for both themselves and their children, and it may be beneficial to explore the assumption that teachers' understanding is grounded and perhaps examine the consequences of their acts towards themselves and others, both inside and outside of schools.

Empathy Training

Empathy is a particularly important factor in the success of those people who work in jobs where there is a high degree of interaction with other people such as nursing, teaching, or administration (Daniel, 1995). Work on engaging sincerity in order to enhance a teacher's ability to be empathic brought up the question of how empathy is learned. The teachers in this study concluded that there is a need for new ways of helping teachers to develop their abilities to perceive and express empathy in educational and caring contexts because of the low levels of

empathy in teaching and caring that limit rich and profound interactions between a teacher and a child or a teacher and a child's parents. There have been great discussions of examples of good practices in teaching empathy across a range of populations and disciplines (Howe, 2013). Nevertheless, the teachers asserted that specific and systematic teacher empathy training is related to its value for the realities of teaching and caring practice. Peck (2014) also argued for the need to renew our focus on empathy in early childhood education teacher preparation programs. A focus on empathy in the context of early childhood education may increase teachers' empathic awareness, and learning how to cultivate empathy without reaching empathy fatigue or burnout may benefit not only teachers but also the children and the parents with whom they work (Peck, 2014).

According to Hoffman (2000), empathic abilities can be learned and developed through training. Daniel Goleman (1995) also stressed that as an ability, empathy can be enhanced through desire and training. According to Goleman, training should focus on ensuring that teachers are proficient at empathizing with young children in a way that makes them feel respected and valuable. This ability involves effective communication, including active listening, affirmative approaches, and effective problem solving. He described the definition of empathy as accounting for not only an understanding of others' feelings and behaviors, but also intelligently using that understanding to stimulate stronger interpersonal relationships and make better decisions (Goleman, 1995). The findings from the teachers' understanding and expressions of empathy including their ideas regarding the concept of, types of, and characteristics of or constraints of empathy, could be utilized to design an effective program to advance knowledge regarding empathic caring and to cultivate experts in the area of empathy education.

Creating a Culture of Empathy for Caring Relationships

By raising awareness of and altering the contexts in which teachers work, we can improve the social and moral development of future generations (Cooper, 2004). In addition to professional efforts for cultivating a greater awareness of empathy within teachers, teacher empathy needs to be improved by altering their work environment to one that satisfies their social needs (e.g., acceptance, love, and belonging) and balances their relationships. Essentially, many teachers' social needs are met by engaging with interactive relationships with others. In educational settings, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) highlighted the importance of teachers' social and emotional competence (SEC) and well-being in the development of healthy teacher-child relationships; they further recognized that various contextual factors, both inside and outside of the school building, may influence teachers' SEC. In the same vein, teacher's potential for empathic caring may also be examined through the lens of the context in which they work in accordance with the idea of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943, 1954). Regarding social relationships, the findings from the study confirmed the view that teacher-parent relationships are a significant context that must be examined as these relationships indirectly influence developing children. Thus, the findings from this study propose renewed perspectives that socio-cultural attention, social support, and altered perceptions are required to enable teachers to treat young children in authentic and profound ways.

In addition to the physical context of their work, the need to be understood, valued, and accepted both in and out of the classroom arose as one of the most important contributors to enabling empathic behavior in teachers. The findings from this study implied that when teachers' basic survival needs (e.g., physical working conditions, personal safety, and feeling secure in their environment) are satisfied and they achieve a steady job and stable income, they move up

one level on the hierarchy in fulfilling their social needs, including the need for love and belonging, and they look for intimacy with others and develop relationships with others in authentic and empathic ways. Applications of Maslow's hierarchy theory (Maslow, 1943, 1954) to the work of the classroom teacher are obvious. Satisfaction of social needs is important, with the intent that teachers feel understood and accepted. Feeling that you have been empathized with contributes to mental health and psychological well-being, thus encouraging further displays of empathy towards others. As a way of altering the context of teachers' work, fulfillment of social needs may impact the psychological state of teachers, and could motivate them to perform additional acts of empathic caring and teaching.

Early childhood teachers and caregivers are required to concentrate on other's needs, such as those of children and parents. As noted earlier, equal distribution of power between teachers and parents or teachers and children means that each party is ready to show attention toward the other's needs, with an overall sense of cooperation coexistence (Goleman, 1995). The findings from the study related to the paradigm in expectations leads the concept of power to influenced empathy gap. Power relates with empathy gap because it is significant contributor to restrict the interpersonal relationship and compares the power differences (Handgraaf et al., 2008). Power inequality in between teacher and parents resulting may contribute to empathic imbalance and emotional exhaustion. If the teachers always are in low position in the situations marked by unequal power, they are likely to experience an imbalance between giving and receiving in the empathy wherein their needs are alienated by those of high power position (Stern & Divecha, 2015).

The findings from the study indicated teachers' perceptions that, many times, their relationships with parents are characterized by unequal power dynamics that may be a barrier to

empathizing with each other for the sake of the developing child. Peck (2014) also described teachers' perceptions of teacher-parent relationships and their influence on the teachers' empathic understanding and its expression. In both this dissertation research and Peck's work, the teachers demanded satisfactory partnerships with parents. They overtly expressed a need for more from their partnerships with parents and oppositions to their expectations that may cause a lack of understanding regarding the behavior of children within the classroom (Peck, 2014). Hence, we need to recognize barriers such as power and inequality, and the challenges of empathizing across such distances (Kruznaric, 2014). With regard to social relationships, the findings from the study shed light upon the notion of the well-established partnership between the school and the family. Engaging in empathic caring means involving families and communities as partners in identifying and meeting the needs of children (James, 2010).

Overall, failing to satisfy social needs and the presence of an imbalance of power in relationships result in empathic deficits and issues with mutual respect in teaching and caring. Furthermore, empathy plays a crucial role in inspiring social change and contributing to the growth of society. Creating empathic cultures may help to form the foundation of a more caring society wherein social, emotional, and moral development of future generations is seen as a priority.

Building a Culture of Empathy for Sustainable Development

With rapid population growth, increased diversity of needs, and numerous other systemic problems, all humans are now required to mutually expand their commitment to empathy in order to find balance within the self as well as within the greater society. The goal of education should always be to leverage learning as an agent of social change – the kind of objective that engenders leadership and citizenship (Deresiewicz, 2014). One of the principle

purposes of education for sustainable development is to increase children's cognitive and affective skills, effectively influencing people's values, including those surrounding empathy (Ampuero et al., 2015). In the meantime, teachers are responsible for spreading empathy for a sustainable society. The findings from this study suggest an extended concept of the 'WE'-evolution of family units by spreading the domain of empathy as an essential part of humanity (Ehrlich, & Ornstein, 2010). Erhlich and Ornstein (2010) argued that humans are wired to be empathic and this trait must be extended to include the whole human family if we are to survive. According to them, lack of empathy toward others is at the root of human sustainability problems. They suggested how human beings as a whole global family should develop more empathy toward one another to ensure a sustainable future. This idea relates to the importance of empathic care and education for sustainable development in the early years because young children form the basis of sustainable development for the future. As teachers are closely related to children, their families, and their communities, teachers' understanding of empathy may play a pivotal role in linking extended empathic units for sustainable society.

Specifically, teachers can help children to understand how and why empathy ought to be an important part of their lives. Maslow (1943, 1954)'s hierarchy of needs incorporates the idea that empathy is key for sustainable development through early childhood education. According to this theory, Maslow stated that people tend to fulfill their needs in order of their importance to survival, safety, love, belongingness, and esteem. In schools, teachers are obligated to foster a sense of belonging with children through high quality communication and empathic understanding and expressions. When young children seek intimacy with others, they build friendships and connect with others resulting in and developing caring relationships. Such relationships can be expanded beyond human relationships to include other beings, such as

nature, by emulating teachers' empathic attitudes and morality in their interactions with nature (i.e. planting, watering, feeding, or outdoor activities). Thus, the current study implies that teachers' ideas and behaviors regarding empathy must be placed at the center of education for cultivating sustainable world.

Implications for Further Study and Recommendations

The findings from this study provided a description of how this group of teachers understood empathy and how they expressed empathy in their interactions and relationships with young children. However, some questions arose throughout the process of conducting this research, including how to further develop the ideas embedded within.

First, the participants in this study were selected by their principals as individuals who typically show empathy toward their students. Although this was helpful for the study, further research on a wider range of teachers with varying behaviors might strengthen its claims. Namely, there is a need to conduct further research that includes children's descriptions of teachers that are perceived as 'non-empathic' or 'not there for them. Surely, despite their young age, the children's descriptions could be useful in exploring symbolic and expressive approaches such as painting, role-play, and so on. Second, although individual interviews for understanding each teacher's dispositions related to empathy were enlightening, these did not provide any sort of quantitative evidence. Therefore, future research might include accessing an assessment of teachers' dispositions related to empathy prior to and then after the introduction of empathy training. Assessing empathy quantitatively at the beginning of a study such as this one could provide a basis for generating interview questions and to help focus observations. Finally, including the families' perspectives on empathic behaviors of teachers could provide a rich layer of data with which to work.

In this study, the teachers perceived teacher-parent relationships as a major contributor to treating their children in sincere ways. Bringing in the family perspective would give more insights on how the role of empathy is perceived in teacher-parent partnerships, resulting in a more complete understanding of empathy's role in early childhood education and caring.

Moreover, data collected within the current research study were based on the perceptions of preschool teachers within a private school in a metropolitan school district in Gyeonggido, South Korea. There were a few limitations in this study, including a lack of diversity among participants. This study suggests a contextual factor that might be worth exploring with greater diversity in the future. In order to be able to generalize these findings, it would be important to conduct further study is done with other populations of teachers within the school district. Due to the diverse needs of children across the country, it would be beneficial to do a similar study in different locations, such as urban and rural school districts. For instance, as different contexts impact teacher empathy, exploring teachers and children in different environments could be included in future studies. Teachers and/or children of different backgrounds and/or socio-economic circumstances perceive empathy and caring differently. Furthermore, school location, the type of school (public vs. private), and the diversity level within the school, are all important factors. Conducting further research with a wider representation of the different types of schools in South Korea might validate the findings of this study.

Furthermore, in this study, all of the teachers were single women with no marital experience and without children of their own, which is typical South Korean preschool teacher in many ways. Studying teachers in different contexts include: different genders (i.e. male preschool teachers) or different family situations (i.e. married or having children). Certainly, the findings from the study indicated that teacher empathy was embedded in the discourse of

teaching as mothering and caring are naturally related. Care-focused feminism is a branch of feminist thought and theory that addresses maternal ethics. The teachers in this study often stated that if they were mothers, they might be able to more easily empathize with parents based on their shared experience of motherhood or having children. However, whether or not these teachers' understanding of empathy stemmed from gender factors or family structures was not explored in this study. Thus, teachers with different backgrounds could be included to provide additional insight and perceptions regarding teacher empathy and its expression.

Additionally, the data collected in this study explored the connection between teachers' empathic expressions in authentic ways and children's responses. From this data, teachers' unconscious empathy and caring were based in the hope that their efforts might enable children to better connect with one another, in turn motivating individual growth. Nevertheless, to further support teacher's perceptions of the impact of empathic teaching and caring, further study is needed to understand an empirical relationship between teacher empathy expressions or strategies and children's achievements. Future research might collect additional practical applications of this strategy utilizing teacher's continuous reflective journals, and uncovering more empirical examples of how to implement the strategy within their own daily empathic teaching and caring. Additional empirical evidence could support educational leaders in their efforts to provide research-based quality professional development and best practices.

Finally, the findings from this study suggest that teacher's empathic understanding and expression play a role in encouraging children to empathically engage in various relationships within their class, society, and world. This information would be of benefit for use in both pre- and in-service professional development of teachers of young children in early childhood education programs. In professional development training for in-service teachers or a class for

pre-service teachers, the participants would be given the opportunity develop their own perspectives about what teacher empathy is and the impact of empathic understanding and expression on young children. Pre-service teachers would have the opportunity to internalize the types and characteristics of teacher empathy that they observed as student teachers and then emulate such behaviors later in their own classrooms. By observing their supervising teachers, pre-service teachers could learn how they connect to children as individuals to meet their needs. Professional development related to empathy would allow both pre-service and in-service teachers to reflect deeply on what is, and is not, empathic caring, and how to defeat barriers and face dilemmas that may arise.

Also, as previously stated, this study concluded that teacher empathy is heavily influenced by the contexts in which teachers may perform empathic acts. Factors that reduce empathy in schools may be further applied to other ‘caring services.’ To facilitate these findings, administrators or policy makers could use the results from this study to provide optimal working conditions for teachers to empathize with young children and their families. Also, in teacher preparation programs, teacher educators could provide opportunities for prospective teachers to consider how empathic teaching and caring might best be expressed to better support children before becoming a teacher. For example, Park (2015) investigated variables that affect the empathy and happiness of pre-service early childhood teachers with a focus on family resilience. According to this study, pre-service early childhood teachers’ empathy was influenced by their personal background and family resilience. Likewise, future studies could be conducted to explore better ways to support pre-service and experienced teachers in internalizing and conceptualizing teacher empathy with consideration for personal history, family contexts, or previous empathic experiences within the community. It is recommended that various facets of

the contexts which influence teacher's empathy need to be explored in-depth, not just the teacher's quality, characteristics, or disposition.

Concluding Thoughts

The research presented here has explored the relationship between an understanding of teacher empathy in early childhood care and education and the various contexts that affect it, including personal and social-cultural factors. A total of ten qualitative interviews and over 180 hours of lesson observations were conducted with three preschool teachers. The interviews were analyzed to understand and interpret empathy in the teachers' relationships with children and families and to explore the teachers' perspectives of empathy. Teacher empathy was referred to as the ability of the teacher to notice children's responses, to understand their feelings, thoughts and experiences without any biased inferences or judgments, to communicate with children in authentic ways in order to fulfill their needs, and to build successful relationships with children. Teachers' understanding of empathy and its expression were naturally embedded in the discourse of mothering but were complicated by a lack of caring discourse. This study indicated the challenges, dilemmas and conflicts that the teachers expressed and what they perceived as preventing their ability to pay attention to teacher empathy and affect the quality of empathy in classroom. This study implies the necessity and importance of training and preparation programs for pre-service and in-service teachers in order to successfully develop their abilities to express empathy toward children, effectively cultivating sustainable development through early childhood care and education.

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APPENDIX A. LETTER OF COOPERATION

Letter of Cooperation for Data Collection in Schools

Parangsae Preschool

10, Hugok-ro, Ilsanseo-gu, Goyang-si, Gyeonggi-do, Korea
[REDACTED], <http://www.parangsae-i.com/>

April 26, 2015

Human Subjects Office
Office of Research Administration
Indiana University
Carmichael Center, Room 203
530 E. Kirkwood Avenue
Bloomington, Indiana 47408
Phone: (812) 856-4242

To Whom It May Concern:

Hyojin Kim has requested permission to collect research data from the teachers at Parangsae Preschool. I have been informed of the purposes of the study and the nature of the research procedures. I have also been given an opportunity to ask questions of the researcher.

As a representative of Parangsae Preschool, I am authorized to grant permission to have the researcher recruit research participants from our Parangsae Preschool. Hyojin Kim is also permitted to collect research data during school hours at our school(s).

If you have any questions, please contact me at [REDACTED] or

<http://www.parangsae-i.com/>.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Preschool Principal

Provide the name and official
title of the person who has
authority to grant permission

APPENDIX B. LETTER TO PARENT

Information for Parents about a Research Project at Your Child's Preschool

Dear Parent or Guardian,

My name is Hyojin and I am doctoral student (Ph.D.) at the Indiana University Bloomington, completing my dissertation in how teacher understand empathy in their classroom and what they express their understanding in their value, belief, language, or interaction with children. This is important because more teacher are empathic, which is providing more caring, empathic understanding, and supporting for children's experiences and emotions.

We are asking you to be understood a research study. The purpose of this letter is to give you the information you will need to help you understand what will happen in your child's preschool and explain it your son or daughter.

We will take notes during the observation in the natural settings in school. Only the research team will have access to these notes, which will be kept in a locked file cabinet. Your child's name or other identifying information will not be on any of these notes; a study code will be assigned instead and the link between your child's name and the code will be destroyed by May 31, 2016.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me by phone or email. My phone number is [REDACTED] and my email address is kimhyoj@indiana.edu. Please note that I cannot guarantee the confidentiality of information sent by email.

If you have any questions about your child's rights as a research subject, please contact the Indiana University Human Subjects Office: 812-856-4242, Email: irb@iub.edu.

Thank you in advance for your understanding and consideration!

Hyojin Kim, MS

Doctoral Student

Indiana University

Curriculum and Instruction

Curriculum Studies in Early Childhood Education

APPENDIX C. CLASSROOM OBSERVATION FIELD NOTES (SAMPLE)

Date: 10/21/2015

Time: 10:00-15:00

Subject: Moon

Descriptive notes	Reflective notes
<p>During playing time, conflicts between children occurs Child: teacher! I think Sung might drop the tray by passed the storage closet. But she doesn't clear up. I said she need to clean up!</p> <p>Teacher: Woo, you don't say to her just clean up if you don't know exactly she did or not. How do you think to say that let's clean up together I could help you. No one know whom drop something, help each other. Ok?</p> <p>At the section of blocks play (conflicts between children during arrange of artworks) Teacher: What's the problem with you? Child: Seo doesn't make me place my item at here. I think we can exhibit both of artworks together. Teacher: (moves to Seo) Seo, did you say to him don't place your item? (eye contact) Child: if they are reached, bumped, my item might be broken down. I just worried about it. (frowned in concern) Teacher: I see, I totally understand what you're saying and what you're worried. Could I make enough spaces for you guys to display all of yours? There is no concerns to be bumped each other. Are you okay? Child: (nodding of his head and smiling) Teacher: Seo, could I say something to you? If you just prevent him place his item or display it without any explanation, how does he feel? Child: He might be upset. Um...I have to say to sorry to him. (He is running to his friend)</p> <p>At the end of play time, a child ask a teacher complete his artwork today. However, an aid doesn't know that and say to him clear up now. Aid: Hong! It's time to clear up. You need to stop your play. Teacher: Miss Yu, Hong want to complete his artwork today, he just needs to get 10 minutes. It is acceptable. After completed his play, he participates in cleaning up with other groups.</p>	<p>Conflict situations: teacher as birding between children Empathic structures, discipline Explain why</p> <p>Conflict situations: teacher as birding between children Empathic structures, discipline Explain why Listening and tone of voice Meeting needs (sensitivity)</p> <p>Accept and respect children's interests</p>
Comments	
<p>Teacher's empathy was observed differently depending on different contexts such as teacher-children interactive empathy, classroom climate. Thus, teacher empathy should be understood within deep contexts, is acted as following constraints.</p>	

APPENDIX D. 1ST INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Preschool teachers' Biography Information and Backgrounds (e.g., personal and professional experiences with children): Use of Relational Map and Timeline

Each interview will take approximately one hour and will be like an open-ended conversation, allowing the interviewees who want to speak to do so. In other words, the interviewer will not need to lead the interviewees to answer each question in order. The interviews will give the interviewees more opportunities to share their ideas and thoughts on the research topic.

Introduction

- a. Greeting and expression of appreciation
- b. Concise explanation of what I am doing
- c. Asked permission to use voice recorder

Thank you for participating in the study on preschool teachers' understandings and practices regarding empathy supporting healthy relationships and empathy in young children.

Before I get started, I would like to inform you several things. During the interview, please feel to ask any questions and say whatever you want to say. This interview is for me to get to better understand your life. Please remember that I am interested in negative as well as positive comments. Your comments will be extremely valuable for my research.

With your permission, I will be audio-recording our conversation during the interview and record your products (i.e., a relationship map and a timeline). Regarding confidentiality, after the discussion, I will transcribe the voice recordings with use of a pseudonym, and safely save the transcripts and recordings in a separate place. Your names will not appear in my dissertation or any publications in the future.

This session will last for no longer than an hour without taking a break. Whenever you want, however, we can take a break. Let's begin now.

1. Please draw a map of your human relationships.
2. Direction: to draw themselves in the middle of the paper, and to show the **important people** in their lives, indicating the **different degree of their importance**, by

placing them closer or more distant to them; include any **role models**, people whom they admired and whose qualities they would like to have themselves, as well as anyone they might dislike for some reason, who could be regarded as a **negative role model** instead.

3. In your experiences, who empathize with you, or what makes feel empathized with? In what ways do you experience empathy from others (i.e. children, colleagues, parents, etc.)?

--Break time--

4. Please draw a timeline of your life and then explain the events or moments that have been significant and meaningful to you in your life.

Aim: collect the most important turning points and biographical events as seen from themselves own perspectives.

5. Direction: **draw a timeline** starting from zero and going up to their current age indicating the most **important events and changes** that had happened in their lives; to include any events that had happened in the wider world that might have been significant to them, and which they might remember in connection with their own biographical events. –link **individual biographies with histories** (macro level).
6. **Past**-Can you tell me about your teacher education program? Where did you go to school and when was that?
7. Can you give me a brief summary or overview of your teaching career? How long have you held your current position?
8. **Current**-Would you tell me about the backgrounds of the children in your classroom? Describe the culture of your classroom (e.g., special routines, activities that are particular to your classroom).
9. **Future**-Tell me about your expectations for your children's growth and development. What is your biggest goal for your children throughout the year? What are your hopes for your children in the future?

APPENDIX E. 2ND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Preschool teachers' beliefs and understanding of empathy

Each interview will take approximately one hour and will be like an open-ended conversation, allowing the interviewees who want to speak to do so. In other words, the interviewer will not need to lead the interviewees to answer each question in order. The interviews will give the interviewees more opportunities to share their ideas and thoughts on the research topic.

Introduction

- a. Greeting and expression of appreciation
- b. Concise explanation of what I am doing (Graphic elicitation, photo elicitation, and lived experiences)
- c. Asked permission to use voice recorder

2nd individual interviews-Beliefs, understanding of empathy

1. Graphic elicitation:

- Recently, have you heard the word related to ‘empathy’ or thought of it? Please draw a concept map or diagram of empathy as you understand it and explain it.
- Tell me what you think it means to empathize or to have empathy. Why do you think it is important in work with young children? (Will give definition and examples to them as needed.)
- How do you think and classify about teacher empathy?

2. Photo elicitation: Please reflect and discuss photos that the researcher has provided regarding empathy (e.g., categorize photos following your own understanding).

2-1. Teacher Empathy and Children



Examples of photographs to be used with picture elicitation interview: teacher empathy and children. Retrieved from May 18, 2014 <http://blog.naver.com/biztv/220001280794> (left) Copyright by Professor Hwang's Snapshot Aesthetics, and Retrieved from January 20, 2015 from <http://www.dailiang.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=76122> (right) Copyright 2007 by Dailyjoongang.

Questions: Please describe these pictures and reflect on your experiences.

Tell me about teacher empathy or authentic emotional communication in caring and teaching. Tell me about a child who is a difficult for you to be empathized with.

2-2. Teacher Empathy and Situations (e.g., field trip, meal time,)



An example of photographs to be used with picture elicitation interview: teacher empathy and situations. Retrieved May 30, 2013, from <http://news.naver.com/main/read.nhn?mode=LSD&mid=sec&oid=001&aid=0006287485&sid1=001>. Copyright 1980 by Yonhapnews.

Questions: Please describe these pictures and reflect on your experiences.

Talk about the challenging situations to empathic behaviors without true emotional response or authentic communication. Have you experienced mask your own emotion?

2-3. Lack of Empathy as the Social Issues



An example of photographs to be used with picture elicitation interview: Lack of teacher empathy as the social issues. Retrieved January 14, 2015, from <http://daily.hankooki.com/lpage/society/201501/dh20150114225905137780.htm>. Copyright 2014 by Hankook Media Network.

Questions: Please talk about this issue.

Tell me about an incident in which you had to stop yourself from having a negative response and feedback. Even with teachers who have a remarkable capacity to ‘feel with’ have times when they cannot behave that way at ALL times.

3. Tell me about your experiences with empathy for the children with whom

- What’s the meaning of empathy in teaching and interaction with young children?
How do you perceive empathy to affect your relationships with young children?
- How do you think you demonstrate empathy to the children in your classroom? Can you give some examples?
- Are there differences in how you relate to and communicate with individual children in your group? Can you think of examples of how you might show empathy to the whole group versus to individual children?
- How do you think your classroom culture might influence how your children manage their own behaviors and emotions, empathize others, and become engaged?
- How do your children let you know what they want and when they need help? How do you know when your children like or dislike something?

APPENDIX F. 3RD INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Practices, challenges, and ideas to support and act empathy

Each interview will take approximately one hour and will be like an open-ended conversation, allowing the interviewees who want to speak to do so. In other words, the interviewer will not need to lead the interviewees to answer each question in order. The interviews will give the interviewees more opportunities to share their ideas and thoughts on the research topic.

Introduction

- a. Greeting and expression of appreciation
 - b. Concise explanation of what I am doing
 - c. Asked permission to use voice recorder
-
1. Can you describe any ways that you have helped your children to regulate and express their own behaviors and emotions, and empathize with others?
 2. Is there anything in particular related to enacting empathic teaching or interacting empathically with the children in your classroom that makes you feel especially proud?
 3. What are some of the challenges that you face regarding empathic teaching and responses in your classroom? Is there anything that keeps you from being as empathic with the children as you might otherwise be?
 4. Do you have any concerns about any of them? Have you found different children easier or harder to empathize with?
 5. What factors do you think most influence your empathic understanding and practices? What is your main source of support that will enhance teacher empathy?
 6. What advice or ideas would you give to teachers who are thinking of being more empathic in their care and education of young children?
 7. What did I forget to ask you about empathy? Is there anything else you'd like to talk about empathy and working with young children?

APPENDIX G. INTERVIEW SUMMARY (SAMPLE)

DATE: 9/10/2015

TIME: 16:00-17:10 (70 min)

INTERVIEWEE: Kang

CONTENTS: FIRST PHASE INTERVIEW

Interview Summary

- It seems to be easy for her to be empathized with a group of people who work similar as her job (e.g., caregiver, elementary school teacher, nurse). She felt a bond of empathy or connectedness developed between members of the staff, colleagues. Through empathy based on similarity or homogeneity, she could easily share emotions and experiences with them. Such affective empathy seems to be big power to teacher and work in her workplace.
- She said that teacher-parent relationships as the *vertical power relationships* have negative effects on teacher empathy. She feel like that parent are their child's dark shadow. After any incident or parent's complaints, that moments cast a dark shadow cloud over child's face and backside. Both seem to be overlapped to her. Sometimes, she thought parent are clients rather than partners. Recently, excessive parents' complaints cause declining teacher's morale. That demonization correlates to lack of teacher empathy toward children in classroom. (Researcher notes: relationship with the parents need to be considered in all its aspect.)
- Reciprocal empathy as a room for a teacher to empathize all children. A teacher who not be cared by or empathized by someone inside/outside classroom has difficulties to empathize, understand children. There is no space to understand and care for children's mind, interests, and needs.
- If the teachers are continually exposed to psychological stress or not be empathized by other, they are likely to interact as 'SOULESS (participant words)'-masked/disguised empathy with children.

▪Empathy and Professional satisfaction: she thought that most of the teachers have experienced some degree of empathy fatigue or burnout. However, she doesn't know how to deal with it exactly. (Researcher notes: social contexts for teacher as emotional labor, need to change social recognition on teaching, caring. Helping teachers to cultivate empathy could be a way to help teachers increase job satisfaction.)

Researcher notes:

In this research, main question is that how do teachers express empathy in their relationship with young children.

Empathy expression can be observed in various ways such as physical contact, language, tone of voice, and combinations over two. Which means that empathy expression is not just thinking, thought, behavior. Definitely, teacher empathy can be expressed as nonverbal. (Referred in Cooper's Teacher Empathy).

APPENDIX H. FOCUSED GROUP (FOLLOW-UP) INTERVIEW WITH PRESCHOOL L TEACHERS

Preschool teachers' broad understanding and perspectives of empathy

Each interview will take approximately one hour and will be like an open-ended conversation, allowing the interviewees who want to speak to do so. In other words, the interviewer will not need to lead the interviewees to answer each question in order. The interviews will give the interviewees more opportunities to share their ideas and thoughts on the research topic.

Introduction

- a. Greeting and expression of appreciation
- b. Concise explanation of what I am doing (watching video and conversation)
- c. Asked permission to use voice recorder

『Empathize in South Korea Society』

Richard E. Nisbett is a social cultural psychologist at the University of Michigan, Nisbett has surveyed a large number of psychology experiments, including between the modes of thought of "Asian" and "Western" people. In his research, he notes that "East Asians" indicate Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans, while "Westerners" typically means "America". He asserts that human cognition is not everywhere the same, but he is afraid of generalization of research results rather he wants it would be a tool to understand the world considering cultural bond. Specifically, in this book '*The Geography of Thought: How East Asians and Westerns Think Differently and Why*' (Nisbett, 2004), the Western style of thought is characterized as representing the value of "individual distinctiveness" or "independence," while the Eastern style of thought demonstrates the value of "harmonious social relations" or "interdependence." His findings strikes question the long-standing psychological assumption that the way the human mind works is universal.

1. Take a look at the pictures which are used in Richard E. Nisbett (2004)'s experiments. Then share ideas.
 - Does he seem to be happy in this picture or not? Why do you think like this?
2. Take a look at the video and talk about it.
 - Explain: In this video, there are several questions: Why East Asians better able to see relationships among events than Westerns are? Why do East Asians find it relatively difficulty to disentangle an object from its surroundings? Nisbett found that East Asian thought tends to be more holistic whereas Westerners are more analytic, paying attention primarily to the object and the categories to which it belongs and using rules, including formal logic, to explain and predict its behavior.
 - How do you feel to empathize in the society where emphasize harmonious social relationships with other? As a preschool teacher, how do you think working as empathic teacher in this society?

『Reciprocal Empathy』

1. Explain: In this video, Nisbett said the influence of context on the behavior of objects and even of people. He asserts that when making predictions about how people in general could be expected to behave in a given situation, Koreans were much more likely than Americans to cite situational factors rather than personality characteristics as reasons for someone's behavior. If so, how do you think about being an empathic teacher in South Korea? Is it personality characteristics? Or it should be considered situational factors? If so, what factors should be considered as situational factors?
2. Regarding reciprocal empathy, when do you feel be empathized by other such as colleagues, parents, children or community?

『the Importance of Teacher Empathy and Empathic Attitudes』

1. Take a look at the video related to empathic attitudes of deaf parents in the relationships with a child without disabilities, then share ideas: what is the best important factor to build strong relationships? In your classroom, what is fundamental factor to understand, grow, and develop children?

Nisbett, Richard (2004). *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently...and Why*. New York, NY: Free Press.

APPENDIX I. COMPARISON OF WORD/THEMES

Comparison of word/themes
<p style="text-align: center;">Initial characteristics</p> <p>-giving attention, listening, gestures, taking a positive and affirmative approach (praise, encouragement), being accepting and open, showing enthusiasm, being interested, care for safety</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Means of communication</p> <p>-listening, height and distance, facial expression (smiling), language (exclamation, empathic response, 'WE or OUR') and tone of voice, eye contact, movement, time-giver, read mind+But+rules</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Understanding self, others, and explain understanding</p> <p>-understanding others, get inside, self-knowledge, explain why, 'why' questions, rather than 'what', teacher as bridging between children, encourage expression own emotions to others, care for predictability</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Act and take responsibility</p> <p>-solution seeking</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Developing positive emotions/interactions</p> <p>-sole attention, physical contact, mask negative emotions, individual/informal conversation, laughing out, pleasure, fun, happiness, humor, liking, loving, and seeing the good, relaxed, comfortable, and informal climate, time giver, flexibility, mindfulness, fulfillment of satisfaction</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Depth of empathy</p> <p>-all children, meeting needs (sensitivity), individual, sharing memories and experiences</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Breath of empathy</p> <p>-children who were more difficult to empathize with</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Appreciations all relationships</p> <p>-resources, environment, wider relationships, teacher parent relationships-parent as "shadow", school family relationships, staff relationships, teacher child relationships- children as "another colleague"</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Richly adaptive and integrated concept of themselves and others</p> <p>-adapt to both individual and environment, empathy as bridging through literature, teacher as window for children to see the world</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Encourage the perspective of the others</p> <p>-manners, discipline, rules, fairness, individual empathy and whole class relationships, empathic structures, boundary setting, control children's distracted behavior</p>

Mental groups
-child type, learning style
Moral aspects
-conflict situations, moral and empathic link, conceptions of morality
Feigned empathy-pretend empathy vs. sincere empathy
- “soulless saying” , , “superficial empathy” , “perfunctory empathy” , uncared for, being me and being human
Prosocial aspects (Helping, sharing, and caring behaviors)
-modeling prosocial behavior (concerns to others), modeling empathy
Understanding teachers' perspectives nature of empathy in caring/teaching
-conceptions of empathy="beliefs" in relationships, strong relationships, connectedness, intimacy, building based on similarity, consolations, understanding other's perspectives, feeling, sharing, seeking better solutions, read mind, take my side, feel my side, be warmth, reciprocal empathy, role of empathy=teacher as mind reader, teacher's role as mother, teacher's role as caring, perspectives on caring
Dilemma in showing empathy
-concerns on children's rough play and tumble play, dilemma in safety and fun, concerns on children's commercial play, contemporary contexts
Constraints of empathy
-poor ration teacher-child, unempathic manager, lack of time, unpredictable situations, unfamiliar with empathy, unconscious empathy, incapacity to empathize, mental exhaustion, teacher's emotional regulations, teacher's stress, teacher's physical/psychological conditions, judgment by teacher's experiences, teacher's overwhelmed desires, teacher's mindset, social construct-inequality or teacher/parent power relationships (Hierarchical relationship)
Empathy classroom: Empathy, cooperation, and sustainability
-emphasis on cooperation over competition, control competitive climate, empathic structures in competitive culture
Empathy in curriculum/hidden
-conflict situations: teacher as a bridging between children, activity to empathize others (storytelling, perspective taking in portraits, circle time, role-play, self-evaluation, project invitation, building blocks), level of difficulty, scaffolding-personal and academic, respect child own time and choice, respect children's various thoughts, encourage all children's high quality of engagement in learning, sharing various emotions through activity, sharing experiences, expression emotions in various ways-emotional coaching, continuity of experiences, comparison-compare/understand different culture, consider all children's development (coping with depth of empathy-meeting needs)

<p>Contemporary contexts</p> <p>-being me, being human, teachers a “emotional labor”, social expectations, reciprocal empathy, cultural bonding</p>
<p>Other Possible themes:</p> <p>Empathy as relationships-teacher/child, teacher/parent, human relationships in learning</p> <p>Discourse-Empathy and caring, caring as relationships, emotional labor, mothering discourse</p>

APPENDIX J. CODEBOOK (SAMPLE)

*FTL: field notes for teacher Lee

Codes	Exampler statements	case	case#	Definition/explanation
listening, height and distance, facial expression, language (exclamation, empathic response)and tone of voice	T: What? Say it again! (listening, leaning her body forward, and smiling) wow amazing!!	FTL	#1	listening-with humility and caution: James' caring for others
		FTL	#1	
		FTL	#1	
		FTL	#1	
eye contact	teacher is greeting with eye contact	FTL	#1	
language (exclamation, empathic response)	T: Looks great! But, we promised we don't take out of a bag if you brought any plaything, toy. Do you remember? (individual empathy and whole class relationships)	FTL	#1	dilemma between control classroom by rules and empathize individual mind
read mind+But+rules (individual-class relationships)		FTL	#1	
tone of voice	T: (rough and tumble play) What do you want to play? (eye contact)	FTL	#1	concerns about children's safety
Why question, explain why, physical contact	T: (rough and tumble play) You looks like feel so good! Why are you exciting? (smiling but concerned)	FTL	#1	
		FTL	#1	
physical contact, language (exclamation, empathic response)and tone of voice	T: Are you okay? I am frightened by you fallen down. Are you okay?	FTL	#1	
		FTL	#1	
manners	T: Please drop your voices! Other friends cannot focus on their play.	FTL	#1	positive emotions vs perspective of the others
language (exclamation, empathic response)and tone of voice, eye& physical contact	T: (hugging a crying child) I see, I see, if I was you, I'm so sad. (She pets him on his back)	FTL	#1	
		FTL	#1	
physical contact, individual conversation (informal climate), facial expression (smiling)	T: (mop the sweat from a child's brow) Could you a cup of water to drink? Today, the weather is hot. Take care of your health! (She holds a child on her lap).	FTL	#1	Noddings argues that time is needed for real caring relationships to develop, not only through the taught curriculum but through the normal conversations and interactions which take place between people.- Cooper's Empathy, Interaction, and Caring
		FTL	#1	
	T: looks at the children with smiling	FTL	#1	
laughing out/pleasure, fun, happiness	T: laughing out with children during playing time	FTL	#1	
activity to empathize others	Circle time-talking about last weekend (sharing other experiences and emotions)	FTL	#1	
meeting needs	During the circle time, if a child is shy or has difficulty to talk in front of all, a teacher holds her/boys hands looks like a child depends her teacher for talking. A teacher encourages a child has confidence to talk.	FTL	#1	empathy characteristics over one has been occurred at the same time.

APPENDIX K. IRB-HUMAN SUBJECTS LETTER



INDIANA UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH
Office of Research Compliance

To: Mary McMullen
EDUCATION

Hyojin Kim
EDUCATION

From:

Human Subjects Office
Office of Research Compliance – Indiana University

Date: February 17, 2015

RE: NOTICE OF EXEMPTION - NEW PROTOCOL

Protocol Title: Empathy in the Early Childhood Classroom: Exploring Teacher's Beliefs, Understanding and Practices Supporting Healthy Relationships and Empathy in Young Children

Study #: 1501395269

Funding Agency/Sponsor: None

Status: Exemption Granted | Exempt

Study Approval Date: February 17, 2015

The Indiana University Institutional Review Board (IRB) EXE000001 | Exempt recently reviewed the above-referenced protocol. In compliance with 46 C.F.R. § 46.109 (d), this letter serves as written notification of the IRB's determination.

The study is accepted under 45 C.F.R. § 46.101 (b), paragraph(s) (1) Category 1: Educational Research Conducted in Educational Settings. Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as: i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or ii) research on the effectiveness of, or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods (2) Category 2: Surveys/Interviews/Standardized Educational Tests/Observation of Public Behavior Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior if: i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; or ii) any disclosure of the human subjects responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects financial standing, employability or reputation.

Acceptance of this study is based on your agreement to abide by the policies and procedures of the Indiana University Human Research Protection Program and does not replace any other approvals that may be required. Relevant policies and procedures governing Human Subject Research can be found at: http://researchadmin.iu.edu/HumanSubjects/hs_guidance.html.

The Exempt determination is valid indefinitely unless changes in the project may impact the study design as originally submitted. Please check with the Human Subjects Office to determine if any additional review may be needed.

You should retain a copy of this letter and all associated approved study documents for your records. Please refer to the assigned study number and exact study title in future correspondence with our office. Additional information is available on our website at <http://researchadmin.iu.edu/HumanSubjects/>.

If your source of funding changes, you must submit an amendment to update your study documents immediately.

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact the Human Subjects Office via email at irb@iu.edu or via phone at (317)274-8289 (Indianapolis) or (812) 856-4242 (Bloomington).

You are invited, as part of ORA's ongoing program of quality improvement, to **participate in a short survey** to assess your experience and satisfaction with the IRB related to this approval. We estimate it will take you approximately **5 minutes to complete the survey**. The survey is housed on a Microsoft SharePoint secure site which requires CAS authentication. This survey is being administered by REEP; please contact us at reep@iu.edu if you have any questions or require additional information. Simply click on the link below, or cut and paste the entire URL into your browser to access the survey: https://www.sharepoint.iu.edu/sites/iu-ora/survey/Lists/Compliance/IRB_Survey/NewForm.aspx.

/enclosures

APPENDIX L. INFORMED CONSENT FORM (SAMPLE)

Indiana University Assent to Participate in Research

Empathy in the Early Childhood Classroom: Exploring Teacher's Beliefs, Understanding and Practices Supporting Healthy Relationships and Empathy in Young Children

We are doing a research study. A research study is a special way to learn about something. We are doing this research study because we are trying to find out more about **exploring teachers' understanding regarding teacher empathy and its representation in the interactions and the relationships with their children.** We would like to ask you to be in this research study.

Why am I being asked to be in this research study?

You are being asked to be in this research study because **you are an early education professional with experience in education, caring for all young children.**

What will happen during this research study?

We want to tell you about some things that might happen if you are in the study. This study will take place at **Parangsae Preschool.** We think it will last for **fourteen weeks (14 weeks).**

If you want to be in this study, here are the things that we will ask you to do. **We will interview and observe you about your experiences in the classroom with your students and experiences working with colleagues, staffs, or parents. We expect our interview with you to last about 90 minutes.**

Confidentiality

Efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Your identity will be held in confidence in reports in which the study may be published. Your interview answers will be completely confidential. We will audio record our interview with you, but the interview transcripts will be kept in a completely separate area from the files with your identifying information. Our reports about this will be combined across all the professionals we interview and information about you or your school will be obscured to prevent any identification of you and your work setting.

Organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis include groups such as the study investigator and his/her research associates, the Indiana University Institutional Review Board or its designees.

Will I get money or payment for being in this research study?

You will not get any money for being in this research study.

Who can I ask if I have any questions?

If you have any questions about this study, you can ask **the researcher, Hyojin Kim** at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

Also, if you have any questions that you didn't think of now, you can ask later. For questions about your rights as a research participant or to discuss problems, complaints or concerns about a research study, or to obtain information, or offer input, contact the IU Human Subjects Office at (317) 278-3458 or [for Indianapolis] or (812) 856-4242 [for Bloomington] or (800) 696-2949.

What if I don't want to be in the study?

If you don't want to be in this study, you don't have to. It's up to you. If you say you want to be in it and then change your mind, that's OK. All you have to do is tell us that you don't want to be in it anymore. No one will be mad at you or upset with you if you don't want to be in it.

My choice:

If I write my name on the line below, it means that I agree to be in this research study.

Subject's Signature

Date

Subject's Name

Signature of person obtaining assent

Date

Name of person obtaining assent

For IU Human Subjects Office Use ONLY

IRB Approval Date: February 17, 2015

APPENDIX M. STUDY INFORMATION SHEET

IRB STUDY #1501395269

INDIANA UNIVERSITY STUDY INFORMATION SHEET FOR

[The Empathy Classroom: Exploring Teacher's Understanding and Acts about Empathy for Young Children]

You are invited to participate in a research study of **[exploring teachers' understanding regarding teacher empathy and its representation in the interactions and the relationships with their children because teacher empathy may be crucial for building healthy classroom climate to foster children's social-emotional development, well-being, as well as academic success.]**. You were selected as a possible subject because **[you are an early education professional with experience in education, caring for all young children]**. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

The study is being conducted by **[Hyojin Kim, Doctoral candidate at Indiana University-Bloomington]**.

STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to **[explore teacher understanding of teacher empathy as well as its practice and influence on children's empathy-related behaviors within the context of the early childhood setting. This study is proposed to conduct a qualitative case study so that I can gain an in-depth understanding of how early childhood teachers conceptualize, internalize, and demonstrate empathy in their everyday interactions and relationships with young children (e.g., through value, perception, or language).]**

PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY:

[If you agree to participate in this study, we will interview and observe you about your experiences in the classroom with your students and experiences working with colleagues, staffs, or parents. We expect our interview with you to last about 90 minutes. We will conduct the interview at any time and place that you find convenience. The interviews will be audio taped with a tape recorder and the audio tapes will be erased at the end of the study. You may also be contacted for a follow-up interview to clarify information. In order to triangulate the evidence that we will collect through the interview, we will observe the three participants over several months surrounding the interview schedule. We will observe three different classes at different age levels (e.g., 3 years, 4 years, and 5 years old) for each participant, in order to obtain a broader picture of their teaching practices and responses. These observations will be taken three times per a week at the preschool, meaning that each participant will be observed one time per a week. We will conduct classroom observations for four hours per day (9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.) during the data collection period. In total we will observe each participant for over forty-eight hours during the data collection period. The final observation set will involve the last data source collected through teachers' narrative reflection on their lives and group discussion.]

CONFIDENTIALITY

Efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Your identity will be held in confidence in reports in which the study may be published. **[Your interview answers will be completely confidential. We will audio record our interview with you, but the interview transcripts will be kept in a completely separate area from the files with your identifying information. Our reports about this will be combined across all the professionals we interview and information about you or your school will be obscured to prevent any identification of you and your work setting.]**

Organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis include groups such as the study investigator and his/her research associates, the Indiana University Institutional Review Board or its designees.

PAYMENT

[You will not have any costs from participating in this study. You will be compensated for participating in this study. To compensate you for your time, you will receive a \$25 gift certificate your participation.]

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

For questions about the study, contact the researcher **[Hyojin Kim]** at **[REDACTED]** or **[REDACTED]**

For questions about your rights as a research participant or to discuss problems, complaints or concerns about a research study, or to obtain information, or offer input, contact the IU Human Subjects Office at (317) 278-3458 or [for Indianapolis] or (812) 856-4242 [for Bloomington] or (800) 696-2949.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF STUDY

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with **Parangsae Preschool**.

We don't believe this study will involve any risks. If you are uncomfortable responding to a question, you may choose not to answer. If you would like to stop participating at any time, you have the right to do that.

If you decide to participate in this study there may be no direct benefit to you. It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit society by helping us to learn how to better care young children with considering empathy and the professionals with whom they collaborate.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. If you decide to not participate in the study or leave the study early, it will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

HYOJIN KIM

Email Address: kimhyoj@indiana.edu; paranhjkim@gmail.com

EDUCATION

- 2017 **Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana**
Ph.D. (degree granted, June 2017)
Major: Curriculum Studies-Early Childhood Education
Minor: Human Development
Research and Study Interests: Caring for the well-being of all in the notion of teaching as caring, emotional work; professional development for early childhood teachers teaching socio-emotional development to young children; children's understanding of emotional resilience, prosocial behavior, and empathy.
- 2010–2011 **Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana**
Master of Science in Education
Major: Elementary Education-Early Childhood Education
- 2001–2004 **Duksung Women's University**
Bachelor of Science (Major: Early Childhood Education)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2014 **Early Field Experience and Student Teaching Supervisor**
Associate Instructor (K495 Urban Field Experience)
Indiana University, Bloomington, IN
Office of Student Teaching
- 2013–2014 **Research Assistant**
Indiana University, Bloomington, IN
Code data and review literature on continuity of care

2009–2010	<p>Researcher</p> <p>Korea Childcare Promotion Institute</p> <p>Government funded research institute</p> <p>Early childhood care and education program/curriculum develop</p>
2005–2008	<p>Kindergarten Teacher</p> <p>Parangsae Kindergarten, Gyeonggi, Korea</p>
2006–2008	<p>Student Teaching Supervisor</p> <p>Parangsae Kindergarten, Gyeonggi, Korea</p>
2005–2008	<p>Research Assistant,</p> <p>Parangsae Kindergarten, Gyeonggi, Korea</p> <p>The 7th national curriculum (early childhood) study & development</p> <p>by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, Korea</p> <p>Language thinking and education through scientific play in early childhood</p> <p>by MyongJi University school of education</p> <p>A Study on the Sex Role and the Child-Rearing of Equality in Both Sexes by Toddler Parents</p> <p>by Ehwa women’s university graduate college of education</p> <p>The Effect of Integral Art Appreciation Activities to Enhance Children’s Emotional Intellects</p> <p>by Yonsei university graduate college of education</p>
2004	<p>Student Teacher</p> <p>Duksung Women’s University</p>

2008-2009	Volunteer Teacher at Teresa's House, Korea Community Care Service for parentless or low-income family's children
2007-2009	Volunteer Teacher at "Synthetic Support for Infants & Toddlers" Center funded by government, Korea
2004-2002	Volunteer Teacher at Volunteer Teachers' Club, Korea; undergraduate students for children

PUBLICATIONS

- McMullen, M. B., Yun, N. R., Mihai, A., & Kim, H. (2016). Experiences of Parents and Professionals in Well-Established Continuity of Care Infant Toddler Programs. *Early Education and Development*, 27(2), 190-220.

PRESENTATIONS

- McMullen, M.B., Kim, H., Yun, N (2013, November). Continuity of relationships: Well-being for all participants in birth-3 programs. Presentation for the National Association for the Education of Young Children Annual Conference, Washington, DC.
- McMullen, M. B., Mihai, A., Kim, H., Yun, N (2013, April). "It's like, you know, we become family": What Parents, Teachers, and Administrators Say about the Benefits of Continuity of Care with Infants& Toddlers. Presentation for the Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children Annual Conference, Indianapolis, IN.
- McMullen, M. B., Mihai, A., Kim, H., Yun, N (2013, April). Relationships that Last: Continuity in Birth to Three Care &

Education. Presentation for the CIRCAS, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN.

AWARDS, SCHOLARSHIPS AND HONORS

- Instruction-Learning Material Method Development for Young Children in The Kindergarten and Pre-School' Competition (2007)
 - Superiority award by Gyeonggi Provincial office of Education, Korea (obtaining conceptions of mathematics & science through play
 - Scholarship-Awarded by Duksung Women's University *Excellence GPA*(2001)
-

CERTIFICATE AND LICENSES

- Play therapist license *providing by* Ehwa Women's University (2007.11)
 - National Certificate 'child care center administrator' *providing by* Ministry of Health and Welfare, Korea(2007.3)
 - National Certificate 'child care teacher' *providing by* Ministry of Health and Welfare, Korea (2005.2)
 - National Certificate 'preschool teacher/kindergarten teacher' providing by Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Korea (2005.2)
-

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- National Association for the Education of Young Children
- Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children